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ADVENTURES

OF

AN AIDE-DE-CAMP:

OR,

A CAMPAIGN IN CALABRIA.

BY

JAMES GRANT, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR."

Claud. I look'd upon her with a soldier's eye,
That liked, but had a rougher task in hand
Than to drive liking to the name of love:
But now I am returned, and that war thoughts
Have left their places vacant; in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
Saying how I liked her ere I went to wars.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ADVENTURES

OF AN

AIDE-DE-CAMP.

CHAPTER I.

ITALIAN INTRIGUES IN COUNTRY QUARTERS.

On arriving at the base of those lofty rocks which were crowned by the Villa Belcastro, a sound like the baying and growling of dogs, caused Marco's horse to snort, and mine to plunge and curvet furiously. On advancing a little further we discovered by the light of the moon a sight which filled us with disgust. Two enormous lynxes had been contending for the shattered corse of the Cavaliere Galdino, which had already suffered considerable mutilation under their fangs. They retired on our approach, but one dragged the remains nearly a hundred yards, nor dropped them until we fired our pistols and wounded it, when they both fled over the moun-

tains, howling: one with agony, and the other with fear. We had considerable trouble in getting our horses past the body, which lay fairly in the centre of our narrow path; and, notwithstanding that Cartouche was a trained military charger, he plunged, reared, and perspired with rage and fear, until, by dint of spur, I forced him right over the ghastly remains of our late entertainer.

Soon after, the moon went down: the sky changed from deep blue to dusky grey, and gloomy clouds hurried in flitting masses across it; at times a solitary star shot forth, and then was lost. The tinkling rivulet winding through the valley, and the silver haze which floated from it through pine and orange groves, faded away, and we could no longer see the track before us. Castelermo now proposed that we should bivouac for the night in the first eligible place, that our nags might have better bottom for continuing our journey by daybreak.

After a brief reconnoisance we chose a sheltered spot where there was a little fountain; the water bubbled away from a fissure in one of those masses of grey sandstone so common in Calabria, and of which the rocks of the Apennines are chiefly composed. We picqueted our horses within a circle of little maple trees, which formed a pleasant border round the rocky alcove, and rolling our cloaks about us, were in five minutes

alike oblivious of the terrors of wolves, banditti, and the malaria.

When I awoke, the morning sun was rising like a globe of fire above the mountains, and pouring between their craggy summits a flood of yellow lustre into the misty valley where we lay. Afar off, the villa of Belcastro, its casements gleaming in the dancing sunbeams like plates of polished gold, towered on the cliff that rose above the waving woodlands bathed in purple and white. A solitary fig-tree threw its shadow across the fountain; the rude bason of which had been built by the shepherds with the richly sculptured fragments of some ancient building: a relic, perhaps, of the days of Magna Græcia. On the moss-grown pieces were initials and inscriptions which I had neither time nor lore to decipher; and close by me lay, half sunk in the flowery turf, a mossy Corinthian capital, with a winged horse, exquisitely carved, springing from the acanthus leaves at each corner, and supporting on its outspread pinions the acute angles of the abacus. A glittering snake was twining around it; and the contiguity of such a reptile recalling the adventure with the gypsies, I sprang up, shook my ample cloak, and prepared for the saddle again.

A gallop in the pure air of a breezy morning is delightful exercise; it refreshes the body and enlivens the spirits, bracing the frame and

lightening the heart. The place where we had reposed was swampy, and a pestilential vapour hovered about it, oppressing us with an inclination to doze, which we had some trouble in combating; but our gallop along the sunny mountain-side soon shook off the drowsiness which weighed down our eyelids, and the numbness that stiffened our limbs. The sensation I mean, must have been experienced by all who have bivouacked by night in low marshy places in a warm atmosphere.

We passed the little town of Belcastro, the streets of which, according to ancient use and wont, were so encumbered with herds of wild pigs, the common stock of the inhabitants, that we could scarcely get our startled horses through, and were every moment in danger of being thrown by the snorting porkers running between their legs. We had a hasty repast at a miserable albergo; but it was the best in the place, and, as the host averred, the identical house in which Thomas Aquinas was born.

The roads were so winding and intricate that as yet we were only twenty miles distant from Crotona, and we pushed rapidly forward, resolving to make up for the previous day's delay.

Castelermo, upon whom the adventures of the past night had made a gloomy impression, rode beside me for many miles in silence. His mind was, doubtless, reverting to a thousand long-

forgotten dreams and cherished thoughts, which his interview with the fickle Despina and the sound of her voice had summoned before him; while I, on the contrary, felt light-hearted as the distance diminished between us and the villa D'Alfieri, which it was my intention to visit on our way to head-quarters. I thought more of Bianca's bright eyes and glossy ringlets, than the oblong despatches, returns of killed, wounded, prisoners and missing, lists of captured cannon, stores, &c. &c., with which Macleod had stuffed my sabre-tache, for the perusal of Sir John Stuart.

After a time, the wonted serenity of the cavalier returned, and as the country into which we penetrated became more mountainous and romantic, he related to me many a wild legend and tradition of blood and sorcery—of Gothic chiefs, Norman knights, and Saracen emirs, and many a sad story of Italian love; all of which have long since passed away from my remembrance. Every rood of ground was rich in memories of the past, and covered with the moss-grown relics of bygone nations and ages.

A ride of twelve miles or so brought us to Catanzaro, in the principality of Squillaci, one of the finest towns in Calabria Ultra, situated about two miles from the Adriatic. Catanzaro then bore many traces of that terrible earthquake which in 1783 devastated those provinces and

the Isle of Sicily; and it has been almost wholly destroyed by a similar visitation in 1832. Its ladies were esteemed the most beautiful in southern Italy; but I had little opportunity of judging for myself: we had the pleasure of seeing only one handsome girl, who, during the hour or two we halted, displayed a formidable sample of the worst traits in the Calabrian character. A small party of Italian troops, sent over from Palermo, were quartered in the town. Their uniform was white, with scarlet facings and epaulettes, black cross-belts and heavy bear-skin caps; altogether they were very soldier-like fellows, and their commanding officer, a gay young Neapolitan, whom we met at the table d'hôte, was not less so. As we had been acquainted at Palermo, in the course of ten minutes we became intimate as old friends; and Captain Valerio Piozzi, of Caroline's Italian Guard, soon made us aware that he was the most reckless and dissipated cavalier in Ferdinand's service, and that he thought it no small honour to be deemed so. But we knew all that before: his pranks and gallantries had long furnished laughter and conversation for every mess and coterie in Sicily.

Castelermo changed colour when we met him.

"Valerio Piozzi!" he whispered to me; "our friend is the identical officer of whom our late acquaintance the Signor Galdino was so jealous.

Basta! there was good reason to be on the alert, and keep Despina close while he was so near as Catanzaro!"

"I have news for you, Signor Capitano," said Marco, as we lounged from the table d'hôte towards a cantina.

"My friend, I am glad of that," said the captain, with a half yawn, "'tis so deuced dull here, that one seems quite out of the world —entombed—bedevilled!"

"Il Cavaliere di Belcastro—"

"Ha!" exclaimed the captain, changing countenance, and turning briskly to Marco, whom he keenly scrutinized through his glass, which never left his eye.

"My gay Valerio, I have a tale to tell which will harrow up your heart, if you have one."

"The deuce!"

"The husband of Despina is dead—"

"The devil! is that all?" exclaimed the captain, with an almost uncontrollable burst of laughter. "That makes me merry," he added, stroking his mustachios, which were well perfumed and pointed with pomatum. "The particulars, Caro Signor: slain by the brigands, I presume?"

"No, by his own evil passions."

"Faith, they nearly slew even me in Venice," replied Piozzi, who, on hearing of our visit to the villa, tossed his cap into the air.

"Che gioja, what happiness!" he exclaimed; "I must to horse, and away to Despina (I saw poor Marco's brow cloud). Ola, my horse! Annibale Porko, seek my servant," he cried to a sergeant who passed, "and order my horses in an hour." The soldier saluted, and withdrew. "Per Baccho! 'tis joyous news: old Galdino gone to the Styx. Amen! Devil go with him. What a merry bout we shall have.—And his property—all settled on the Cavalieressa — bravo, Valerio! luckiest of dogs! Here, Signor Cantiniero, wine—wine! What shall we have, Marco—say Signor Dundas—you are a judge: Muscatelle?"

"Basta! no—we have had enough of that," said Castelermo shrugging his shoulders.

"Ha—ha! I forgot," replied Valerio with a reckless laugh—"ruddy Burgogna then—golden Andaluzia—sparkling champagne, gleaming like diamonds in sunbeams?"

"As you please, I am no connoisseur," said I, and two large crystal jars of the last were speedily summoned.

"Corpo di Baccho! it is a punishment for a Carthusian to reside here in this dull place on the Adriatic shore," said the captain, as we lounged on the rustic sofas, beneath the vine covered verandah of the cantina, and pushed the wine jars about the well polished table; "positively I am ennuied to death, and would give a year's pay to

find myself once more at Naples, or even at Reggio—there are some sprightly girls there."

"And yet the women of Catanzaro are considered the fairest in Italy," observed a smart young fellow, with whom we had been conversing on various topics for some time past: he had followed us uninvited from the table d'hote, where his very handsome features and long fair locks had won him our favour.

"Handsome they may be; but I would not give a lively sewing-girl of Naples for the fairest lady in the Calabrias. Ah! had you heard Italian whispered by the dulcet tongues of Venetian girls, you would turn with disgust from the guttural Greek of these poor provincials."

"'Tis a matter of taste" replied our boyish friend, sipping his wine to conceal the rising colour which glowed on his beardless face. "I am a stranger here and pretend not to judge of the beauty or vivacity of the ladies: so I presume is this British Officer; and the Cavaliere di Malta cannot be expected to venture an opinion on such topics."

"Now by all the gods of accursed heathendom!" cried the Italian officer, showing all his white teeth as he laughed boisterously. "Heaven help thine ignorance, most gentle signor of this barbarous land. I have seen at the windows of the Maltese knights fairer faces than all the towns of these wild provinces could produce.

These cavaliers are greater connoisseurs than a Turkish dealer in such commodities; for the portentous cross on their breasts does not in any way freeze the heart below, or render it insensible to such impressions. By grey dawn, many a pretty damsel shrouded in a loose domino have I seen stealing away from the portal of the knights' palace at Naples: though these cavaliers deport themselves demurely enough by day, the stars do not look on merrier revellers or more joyous companions; and the Cavaliere Marco knows well the truth of what I affirm. All Italy knows the famous military *dis*-order of Saint John."

"The Cavaliere Marco would advise your lively valour to speak more gently of his order. Some irregularities are doubtless committed by my brethren of the sword and mantle; but you must bear in memory, the saying of the cunning Lucchesi—'There are good and bad people every where.' Signor, speak not against my order! When I remember what it was but a few years ago—when the church of St. John was hung with the shields of four thousand Knights; its marble floors covered with the achievements of those who were gone; and its dome filled with the captured trophies of the Infidels—when the unsullied banner of the order waved from the ramparts of Sant'. Elmo, and we had gallies at sea and soldiers on the land, my mind is filled with sorrow and regret. When I look back to the glorious days of

our illustrious grand master, old Villiers de L'Isle Adam, to those days when six hundred knights shut up in the island of Rhodes defended it for six months against two hundred thousand Turks, my soul is filled with exultation and chivalry! So beware, Signor Valerio! The Knights of Malta have suffered so much of late from the usurpation of Buonaparte and the unfulfilled and often reiterated promises of Britain, that they have grown somewhat petulant and hasty."

"Enough, signor—I sit rebuked, and submit quietly, knowing that I may be a little in error," answered the frank officer. "But to change the subject: if I am not soon recalled to head quarters, I shall have to quit this Catanzaro without beat of drum. The air of the place is getting quite too hot for me: I have been here only three weeks, and in that time contracted debts to the amount of some thousand ducats. I tried the rouge et noir—abomination! they only made matters worse, and the villanous shop-people, the Podestà, the Eletti and the tipstaves, are all ready to pounce upon me en masse: worse than all, the women of the place are at drawn daggers about me."

"You are quite to be envied!" said the young Calabrian with an air of impatient scorn.

"You shall hear whether it be so," replied the captain. "Ah! the uniform of the Queen's Italian Guard is something new here; and in

truth we have been rather free with our favours: myself in particular. Three narrow escapes have been the consequence (these Calabrians are wondrously prone to assassination): once from the knife of a rascal hired by some frail fair one unknown, and once from a dose of bella donna, with which an angry damsel contrived to drug my chocolate the other morning: when I was just about to drink it, she threw herself at my feet in an agony of sorrow and horror, imploring my pity and forgiveness; so, after abundance of tears, threats, upbraiding, and all that sort of thing, I quietly put her outside the door"—

"And the third, signor; the third?" said the young Calabrian impatiently.

"Was from the poisoned weapon of a furious brother, whose sister I had jilted and grown weary of. Ah! the cowardly dog! he called it honour, I think: rather amusing in this rustic land of fauns and satyrs. But the adventure would have gone otherwise with me, had not my trusty serjeant, Annibale Porko, sucked the wound, and bathed it with brandy. Behold! 't is yet far from well," he added, pulling up the richly laced sleeve of his white uniform, and showing a long scar above the wrist.

"Faith!" said I, "if you have many such scrapes, Captain Piozzi, you are likely to be cut off, and suddenly: an Italian seldom brooks a wrong."

"But I cannot comprehend the nature of these unpolished Calabrians," replied this heedless harum-scarum gallant, into whose empty head the wine was rapidly mounting. "Per Baccho! they are mere savages—hottentots! Will you believe it? if I venture to pay a compliment to the mistress of my billet, or to kiss her daughter (which I am often disposed to do, the said daughter being rather fresh and pretty), the Maestro di Casa jerks up his Messina sash, twirls his whiskers, and plays so ominously with the haft of his knife, that I am compelled to keep my gallantry within very narrow bounds. I must even refrain from those little acts of cavalier-like politeness, by which some obliging citizens of Naples would consider themselves duly honoured: more especially if it were a noble gentiluomo of the Queen's Guard that deigned to salute one of his family. O! for joyous Venice, and its money-making mothers, who for sixty sequins — "

"Basta!" interrupted Marco, "you let every one hear you, Valerio, by speaking in such a key. By St. Antony—!"

"Hush Marco, 't is quite unfashionable to swear by these old saints: the newest canonizations are always most in vogue. St. Antony, indeed! The ancient fool; I would rather swear by his gridiron, which the monks show at Rimini. But to resume. Here, in this cursed

province, if one but looks at a woman, cold iron is thought of instantly, and one may be dead as Brutus in less time than one can utter a credo. —What the deuce can delay my rogue of a groom?"

"You labour under so many annoyances, that I am astonished you have survived them," observed the young provincial contemptuously.

"By the jovial San Cupido! you know not half of them. As my soldiers are apt to imitate their accomplished commander in many things, the king's service has lost several smart fellows in these domestic brawls. But courage, Valerio! It is quite a godsend, this sudden death of that bear, old Belcastro; and as the charming Despina is so near I shall hope to pay her many a visit of condolence. Nay, frown not, Marco, my love for her is of the most pure and Platonic description. Besides, I have sent a most heart-rending memorial to the queen, and it is so well seconded and flanked by the Duchessa di Bagnara, and other fair ladies who are impatient for my return, that I have [no doubt my party will soon be ordered to rejoin at Palermo, without my troubling our gruff commander-in-chief, Giambattista Fardella. Then adieu to Catanzaro, its wickedness, and its women."

"And Signora Teresa with the rest?" asked the Calabrian, with a low voice and a flushing cheek.

"Ha! know you Teresa Navona?" asked the captain, scanning the fine features of the youth with a keen glance. "Do you belong to Catanzaro?"

"Yes, signor,—no. That is, not now," stammered the boy, with angry confusion. "But I once resided here, and have only just returned after a long absence. You know Teresa?"

"As well as man can know such a compound of fascination and subtlety as an Italian woman," laughed the handsome guardsman. "You are to learn, gentlemen, that this is the escapade I spoke of: the duel with the devil of a brother. There was a judge of the grand civil court of Cosenza, who died here lately, after living in retirement since our friends the French crossed the Alps. This learned old fellow had two daughters, Pompeia and Teresa; the first I have never seen, but the last, who resides with her mother here, has been for some time past the happy means of cheering my dreary detachment duty in the towns hereabout: and truly the girl is a magnificent creature for a Calabrian! Her bright eyes and ruby lips are Italian; her white skin, full bosom, and long flowing hair have come with the Greek blood; and her vivacity is quite oriental."

"*Was*, you should say," muttered the young man. "Alas! signor, her vivacity has fled since ou knew her."

"In short, Captain Piozzi, you have had an intrigue," said I.

"Right, signor," he replied, composedly; "but one fraught with the due proportion of mystery and cold steel which usually accompany an Italian intrigue. It being discovered that I had carried the fortress by a *coup de main*, the girl Teresa was consigned to that convent yonder, the campanile of which you now see shining in the sun; and the mother solaced herself with strong hysterics and strong waters until the arrival of her son, a fiery young subaltern of the Sicilian volunteers, who galloped across from the camp of St. Eufemio, with the express purpose of parading me.

"Three days ago, when returning from this wine-house, and just under the Madonna at the street corner yonder, this young spark assaulted me sword in hand; flinging his hat onthe ground and his cloak round his left arm, in the most approved duellist fashion. So furious was his onset that I had scarcely time to stand on my guard, but we thrust and cut at each other like any two bravos on the boards of the San Carlo; my superior skill soon overcame the Herculean strength of the Calabrese officer, and the fifth passado laid him dead at my feet."

"Madonnia mia!" exclaimed the Calabrian, smiting his breast with horror.

"The devil!" I exclaimed; "poor fellow, and you really killed him?"

"Not quite, signor; but old Porko, I believe, brained him with his halberd," was the cool reply.

"The villain, Porko, shall answer dearly for this mutiny and murder!" exclaimed Castelermo, with an aspect of severity. "And so, Signor Piozzi, you have gone from bad to worse; first outraged the confiding sister, and then destroyed the spirited brother!"

"Cospetto!" muttered Piozzi, "I know these things will sound ill at the court, and in old Fardella's office at Palermo, whatever they may be thought of at our mess-house on the Cassero."

"But how will they appear in the court of Heaven, on that dread day, when all men will be judged by their deeds?" asked the Maltese commander, with a stern expression: which, however, did not abash our volatile friend.

"Admirable!" he replied, waving his cigar; "you act the military monk to the life. That sort of air did very well in L'Isle Adam's days, but it won't pass now, Marco; so pray lay it aside, or assume it only in the convent at Malta, or the palace at Naples, and for the present be the frank cavalier of the last hour. A proud spirit cannot brook an admonitory tone. Ah! here comes my rascally groom at last: while he loiters with that girl yonder, let us drink to la Sig-

nora Teresa. Her family, if they be wise, will hush the matter up, and she may yet marry some honest artisan; who will deem her none the worse for having a few ducats from Valerio Piozzi, captain of the Royal Italian Guard, knight grand cross of San Marco, and Heaven knows what more."

The eyes of the young Calabrese flashed fire.

"And think you, base ruffian," he exclaimed, in a voice shrill and tremulous with rage, "that old Albanian Greeks, though now sunk to the grade of mere Italian citizens, will forget that their blood has descended to them from the long line of the princes of Epirus, and permit these foul wrongs to pass without retribution?"

"Insolent brat, I neither know nor care!" replied the captain, grasping his riding switch, and regarding the bold youth sternly; "and but that your chin is smooth as an apple—poh! I can bandy word and blow with any blusterer in Italy, and shall not shrink from a peasant or woodcutter of this rustic land: but now, since the days of chivalry have passed away, tell me, my pretty Messerino, who will become the champion of this fallen star? and, save myself, to whom can she look for redress?"

"To the right hand of her sister, since death has left none other to avenge her," cried the youth, in a voice rising almost to a shriek; and the bright barrel of a pistol glittered in the sun-

light which streamed between the vine-leaves of the trellis. Levelling it full at Valerio, *she* fired, just as I struck up her weapon. From the tone of the voice, and the despair that glared in the eye, there flashed upon me a suspicion of the sex and purpose of this youth.

The ball dashed to pieces the head of the large waxen Madonna, which occupied a lofty niche at the corner of the street. A cry of "sacrilege, and murder!" arose, and the people rushed towards us from all quarters. As the smoke cleared, we discovered the imperturbable captain stroking his moustache, and smiling grimly, but with an air of exquisite nonchalance.

"Thrice my heart failed me; but he is destroyed at last!" cried Pompeia, in terrible accents, as she cast away the pistol (which she had fired with both her eyes closed), and sinking back on the rustic sofa, burst into a passion of tears.

"Holy St. John of Jerusalem, and of Rhodes, look here!" exlaimed Castelermo, while I seized her that she might not escape.

"Wretch!" muttered Marco.

"I am wretched, indeed!" she replied bitterly, still keeping her eyes closed; "yet I do not deem myself so abject as to be grasped thus with impunity. Unhand me, signor: I have only slain the destroyer of my sister's peace, my brother's life (perhaps my mother's too), and the fame of our

family. Guiltless of wanton wickedness, I have only destroyed a ribald and reckless libertine, in the midst of his sinful boasting."

"Here is a devil of a damsel!" said Valerio, with a laugh. "Per Baccho! a pestilent narrow escape it was. But for you, Signor Claude, I might have been chaffering with Charon for a passage across the Styx, and squabbling, perhaps, with old Belcastro on the voyage. To your care I commend this amiable sample of her sex, while I canter off to the villa of Despina."

His servant at that moment rode up with a led horse, and he leaped into the saddle.

"Wretch!" shrieked Pompeia, "hast thou escaped that death so richly merited?"

"Safe and sound, my pretty termagant—aim better next time," replied the officer, caracoling his horse, to push back the clamorous crowd. "Adieu, Caro Marco! adieu, Signor Claude! your most humble servant, my pretty Pompeia. Ola! keep out of my horse's way, signori, the rabble: and so, buona sera, good-evening to everybody;" and, with a reckless laugh, he dashed off at a gallop through the street, which was darkening fast, as the sun had set. He was followed by a volley of execrations from the crowd, some of whom he tumbled into the kennel, as he pushed headlong through.

"Unhand me, signor," said the damsel, with

an assumption of dignity. "I am a Calabrese woman, and all Calabria will applaud the deed!"

A shout arose from the admiring populace; yet the girl trembled with shame, sorrow, and anger.

"But not so will He into whose awful presence you were about to hurl a fellow-being, with many grievous sins and follies accumulated on his head. You would have destroyed him, body and soul: he would have passed away unbidden, unconfessed, and unforgiven! Heaven judge between him and thee, woman! but in this matter you have acted unwisely. Madonna grant forgiveness to you both!" added Marco, signing the cross.

"Madonna grant it!" muttered the rabble round us, bowing their heads.

"I am not a child to be preached to, either by canon regular or church militant!" retorted this fiery damsel. She was a noble-looking beauty, about twenty, with long dark lashes, silken hair, and ripe pouting lips, which consorted oddly with her broad hat and black surtout of the newest Neapolitan cut. The colour was fast returning to her pallid cheek, and the fire of her eyes had never dimmed. "Lead me to the Podesta of Catanzaro! by him will I be judged; but not by a knight of the Maltese cross."

"No, signora," replied Castelermo, "I am not

prosecutor in this matter: to your own sorrows and conscience I leave you—adieu!" and she was led away by the people, her face buried in her mantle, and utterly deserted by that stern confidence which had sustained her throughout this wild affair.

Sergeant Annibale Porko we reported to the officer next in command, who promised to send him to St. Eufemio for trial by court-martial: a pledge which he never redeemed.

About an hour after Ave-Maria rang, we quitted the mountain town of Catanzaro, and struck directly across the country, with the intention of visiting the villa D'Alfieri.

Not long after this affair I remember Castelermo handing me, with a cold and grim smile, a copy of the "Gazzetta Britannica," in which there was a paragraph, announcing that our wild friend the captain had been married to the widow of Belcastro, with great splendour, at the archiepiscopal residence of the Bishop of Cosenza.

From that hour I never again heard him utter the name of Despina.

CHAPTER II.

FRANCATRIPA, THE BRIGAND.

I WAS aware that, according to strict orders, I ought to have proceeded forthwith, without deviation or delay, to Scylla; but a detour of twenty miles, to visit my gentle Bianca, could not in any way injure the service: and how seldom is it when campaigning that the impulse of one's own heart can be obeyed. Too often does duty interfere with the best and tenderest affections of the soldier; sending him forth with a heart seared and almost broken, to fight the battles of his country; or, still worse, to close a long life of expatriation, by perishing amid the pestilent swamps of the West, or the wars and diseases of the East Indies.

We were now getting within the vicinity of the redoubtable brigand Francatripa, and his terrible handiwork became manifest at every mile of the way, as we neared his stronghold in the forest of St. Eufemio. In a solitary pass we

found a carriage, apparently from Naples, a wreck by the way-side, with its springs broken, and one of the mules lying shot between the traces. The trunks, which had been strapped before and behind, were rifled; the morocco lining had been ripped and torn down in search of concealed valuables, and the gilt panels were riddled by musket-balls.

The unfortunate traveller, scarcely alive, lay half out of the vehicle, his head on the ground, covered with wounds, and bleeding profusely: he seemed to have offered a desperate resistance, for one hand grasped a discharged pistol, while the other yet clenched a poniard. We raised him gently, and laid him on the slope of a grassy bank, where his clammy white face and glazing eyes glimmered horribly in the cold moonlight.

"Signor," said Castelermo, as he knelt down and held his crucifix before the eyes of the dying sufferer, "tell us who committed this detestable outrage?"

"Francatripa!" muttered the quivering lips of the dying man, who immediately expired. We then placed the body within the carriage, and after fastening the doors to protect it from the wolves, rode towards a village which lay about a league off, to rouse the peasantry.

A little farther on we passed a poor country girl, weeping over the body of an aged shepherd, whose dog sat whining at his feet.

The old man had been slain by a blow from the butt of a musket. His daughter supported his head in her lap, bedewing it with tears, and wiping the blood from his pale lifeless face and silver hairs with her linen head-dress, while she mingled with her prayers many an anathema on the name of "Francatripa!" Around lay the ruins of their hut: the old man had perished in defence of his flock; and the extreme youth of the girl had alone saved her from being carried off to the stronghold of the brigands.

As we approached the village, the white cottages of which shone in the moonlight on the dark-green mountain side, a lurid flame shot across the sky: they were in flames! Then the reports of musketry were heard: a skirmish had ensued between the brigands and the armed peasantry; the latter had been defeated, and the unrelenting lieutenant of Francatripa, after laying their dwellings in ashes, leisurely retreated up the hills with his band.

"Satan seems abroad to-night!" said I, as the wailing of women and children was borne past us on the night-breeze.

"Since the days of Marco Sciarra, such outrages as these have been matters of daily occurrence in our mountain provinces," replied the cavalier. "These villains have probably been foraging in the valley; and desolation and death invariably attend resistance. But, perhaps, the

villagers may have been guilty of some disloyalty to our cause, and have thus brought upon them the vengeance of Francatripa; who is one of Carolina's robber-knights, and by her authority bears the rank of colonel. Alas! signor, you see how war calls forth all the worst traits of the Calabrian character. When I look on these things, I blush that I am an Italian."

"Truly," said I, "we have seen some things which make me suppose that there is more of truth than malice in the old Italian proverb applied to the Neapolitan people."

"*Naples is a paradise inhabited by devils!*" replied Marco. "Ha! I fought a Tuscan on the ramparts of Valetta one morning, for uttering that impertinent saying."

On reaching the hamlet we found the greater number of the cottages burned down; and the only answers our inquiries received were, "the king of the forest, Francatripa—the hunchback—the devil!"

A man warned us not to proceed, for the banditti were still hovering about; but as only one pass of the mountains lay between us and Maida, we determined to push forward at all risks. After examining our girths and pistol-locks, we dashed at a gallop into a gorge of the hills, which seemed doubly dark after leaving the blaze of the burning hamlet; being also deprived of the moon, whose light

was intercepted by a gigantic peak of the Apennines.

The hoofs of our galloping horses alone broke the stillness around us, until we had reached the centre of the pass, or chasm, where the frowning cliffs arose on each side like sable walls; their summits, in some places, overhanging the base: when, hark! the shrill blast of a Calabrian horn, waking the echoes of that dismal hollow, caused us to rein suddenly up and prepare for action. As the reverberations of the horn died away, a glare of crimson light burst through the gloom: it burned steadily, increasing in radiance and splendour, tinging hill and rock, the forms of ourselves and horses, with the hue of blood, and shedding over the whole landscape, woodland, hill and hollow, the same sanguine tint. This effect, at any other time, or under other circumstances, we should have admired; as it was, our lives were in jeopardy, and delight gave place to apprehension.

An enormous red light, blazing on a pinnacle of rock, distinctly revealed our position and appearance to a horde of banditti, in conical hats or long blue caps and gay parti-coloured garments, who swarmed on the cliffs above and around us, barring advance or retreat, with their levelled rifles.

"Basta!" exclaimed Castelermo, his voice faltering with shame and chagrin. "O! for thirty

cavaliers of John de Valette, or old L'Isle Adam! Must we yield—and to wretches such as these?"

"Surrender or die!" I replied, considerably excited: "the path is open before us; but we should assuredly be blown to pieces before we had moved a horse's length."

We were immediately surrounded, and peremptorily commanded to dismount. I saw how the fierce spirit of my companion blazed up within him as he obeyed the order; and my own indignation was not less. Our swords were next demanded; and, knowing the futility of resistance, I submitted to be deprived of my sabre and despatches.

"My good fellows," said I, "remember I am a British officer!"

"Base vagabonds!" thundered Castelermo, while his pale lips quivered with rage, "at least respect the garb *I* wear! You may keep my sword now, for to me it is useless, after being sullied by such dishonourable hands; but bear in mind that this night you have committed a most horrid sacrilege!"

"We will bear the weight of that easily, cavaliere," said one fellow, "and pay our blessed Mother Church a moiety out of your ransom. We must obey our orders; and if Ferdinand IV., or even the grand bailiff of the province passed this way, they would be required to yield

both cloak-bag and sword to the king of St. Eufemio."

"Take the matter quietly, signor," said another, striking me on the shoulder with insolent familiarity; "remember you might have fallen into rougher hands than Francatripa's free companions."

"Bring a horse-halter, ho! ho! and bind them!" cried a shrill voice, which I immediately recognised. I turned towards the speaker, who had just dropped down from the rocks; but could not distinguish his figure: the blaze of the red light having now expired.

"By Heaven! I would not have surrendered without fighting to the last, could I have suspected this foul indignity!" exclaimed Marco bitterly, while I bit my lips in silence; and Gaspare Truffi, by whose orders we were bound, rolled on the turf yelling and grinning like a fiend with malicious delight and exultation.

"Forward!" he commanded. "Where did you say we were to meet the capitano?"

"Where the Maida road intersects the ancient way to the town of Cosenza," replied one of the band. "He awaits us among the old ruins of those pagan Greeks."

"On then," replied the little man of authority. "On: but, povero voi! keep well together when crossing the hills, or I will blow to the night wind the brains of the first man who straggles!"

I was surprised to find these fierce desperadoes submitting to the incessant hectoring of a pitiful hunchback: but after a time I observed that his commands, although strictly obeyed, were a source of secret merriment to the band. I also discovered amongst them many young men of superior birth, address, and education; who had been reduced to such ignoble fellowship by their own excesses, or by preferring a state of free brigandage on their native mountains, to bowing beneath the yoke of France, and submitting to its military conscription.

Some of them still retained in their manners traces of good Neapolitan society, but the majority were a crew of the most hardened ruffians that ever were congregated together. I fully expected on being presented to the leader, to experience the most brutal treatment; having been always led to suppose that Francatripa was a very demon incarnate, and save Mammone, the worst of all the outlaws of lawless Calabria.

"Now then, gentlemen, remember that with my own hand I will shoot the first who attempts to escape. Hear me! *you* in particular?" said Gaspare Truffi, giving his threat additional force by bestowing on my shoulder a smart stroke with a pistol butt (one of my own silver-mounted pops with rifled barrels, a present from the General.) At that moment, my heart swelled almost to bursting! I turned fiercely towards Truffi; but,

on beholding him astride my gallant grey, with his short crooked legs scarcely reaching below the saddle flaps, his prodigious hump, his overgrown head and amply bearded visage surmounted by a straw hat of the largest size, his grotesque figure viewed by the moonlight was so ludicrous that I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Even the grave Castelermo laughed aloud, and the whole band joined in a hearty roar of merriment. This, though it put us all in tolerable humour, roused the wrath of the hunchback; who glared from one to another without knowing on whom to wreak his passion.

"It is quite a riddle to me how this odd fellow was ever permitted beneath the roof of the St. Agata palace: you remember, we first met him there," said I to my companion.

"The cursed reptile played well and deeply: but I doubt much if he would again dare to approach——"

"Silenzio!" thundered the hunchback, as he forced Cartouche (whom he could scarcely manage) toward me, sideways, and twice endeavoured to ride over me: but the brave charger knew me too well, and always swerved aside when approaching too close. Failing thus in his object, Gaspare dealt me a blow on the mouth with the pistol butt, which covered my face with blood, and nearly demolished my front teeth. The band murmured at this cowardly outrage;

and perhaps nothing but fear of Francatripa prevented his incensed lieutenant from pistolling me on the spot.

We had now arrived at the place appointed; the ruins of a majestic fane, which had once echoed the precepts of Pythagoras and the triumphs of Milo: its massive doric columns, the ponderous abacus, and carved entablature, with the most exquisite specimens of sculpture, were all hurled together in chaotic heaps, just as the temple had been left by some tremendous convulsion, which had levied its glories to the dust. The stones were mossy and green; the vine and ivy, the scarlet fuschia and the wild rose, and a thousand odorous plants flourished luxuriantly and entwined the ruins with wreaths of blossom. But there was something melancholy in the aspect of the place when viewed by the brilliant moon: the same orb which had beheld the first stone of their foundations laid, amid all the religious solemnities of pagan Greece.

A horn was sounded; but the echoes died away, and no answering blast awoke them again: the ruins were minutely searched, but there was no appearance of Francatripa.

"Maladetto!" said one fellow, shrugging his shoulders, "the capitano stays somewhat long with his dear love to-night!"

"Colonello, you should say, Gaetano," replied another. "Does he not bear the king's commis-

sion; ay, and a sweet letter, they say, Carolina sent him, written with her own hand?"

"Yes, and we are to become soldiers like the men of Marco Sciarra. Madonna bless the day! I am tired of this life."

"Gaetano is as bad as his master, who seems to love a throw of the dice at the gaming-table better than a rifle-shot on the green mountain-side in the merry moonlight."

Gaetano only answered by a sigh.

"The smiles must have been sweeter to-night than usual," growled Gaspare Truffi; "he stays so long at the villa D'Alfieri."

"No good will come of his going there; where a woman is, there will always be treachery and mischief," said Gaetano. "May Cupid put it in his heart to bring his girl up the mountains!"

"Welcome to the capitanessa!" said another of the band, drinking from a leathern bottle, which he held aloft at the full stretch of his arm, permitting the sparkling wine to stream down his throat—a famous feat with the Italian vulgar.

"Ho! ho!" chuckled the hunchback, "it would be bearding the grand bailiff with a vengeance, to follow Gaetano's advice. But, Sfarmato! wind the horn again!"

Once more its blast was poured to the hollow wind: but there was no reply, save from the echoing woods of Maida; and the banditti, as they seated themselves on the verdant grass and

marble blocks, cursed the delay of their leader in no gentle terms.

The villa D'Alfieri! How my pulses quickened at the sound. Francatripa was then the lover of Annina, or some of the waiting women. I resolved to speak with the viscontessa about the dangerous friends with whom her household corresponded. How little I then knew of the ambition and presumption of that accomplished robber!

"Here, good fellow," said I, to the one whom they named Gaetano, "take the handkerchief from my breast, and give my moustachios a wipe. You see how freely the blood is flowing from my mouth."

"Certainly, Signor Cavalier," said the man, good-naturedly, raising his hand to his hat.

"Ha!" said I, "you have been a soldier?"

"Yes, signor," said he, turning pale, "I enlisted in the Corsican Rangers, under the British: but I knew not their fashions; I quarrelled with a sergeant, and they flogged me like a dog; I ran away, and so I am here."

Before he could do me the simple act of kindness requested, Gaspare snatched the handkerchief from his hand, and threw it away; dealing Gaetano at the same time a sound box on the ear, and muttering a remark, which, when translated, meant that I might "bleed to death, and be ——"

I was extremely exasperated; and feeling at that moment the cords which bound me becoming a little slackened, I snapped them asunder, and rushing upon Truffi unhorsed him like lightning; then snatching from him his pistols and poniard, I threw them to a distance. He swore a terrible oath, and grappled with me. I was amazed by the strength he displayed: although barely the height of a well-grown boy, he appeared to possess the strength of two ordinary men, and his arms and hands were of great size and muscular power. My breast burned with shame to find myself more than matched in the grasp of a creature so despicable: I would rather have died than have been defeated. The brigands, aware of their little lieutenant's great strength, confidently expected he would overcome me; so, without interfering, they leant upon their rifles, and with shouts of laughter crowded round to witness a contest which Castelermo beheld with equal indignation and astonishment: he, of course, supposed I should toss my adversary into the air like a cricket-ball.

At any other time, or under different circumstances, I would have scorned to encounter in any manner such an adversary: but, alas! I found myself almost mastered by this miraculous dwarf.

Firm as Hercules, he stood planted on his curved legs, which appeared to possess all the

unyielding principle of the arch; while his huge head, round and hard as a cannon-ball, was thrust like a battering-ram into my breast, and his ample hands grasped me like a vice: he had all the aspect of some powerful gnome, or dwarf, of German romance; but dwarf or devil, I was determined not to yield while bone and muscle remained firm.

While quartered at Truro, I had been taught a few of the tricks of wrestling by a corporal of the Cornish Miners, and I now put all these in practice against this crooked Italian; who, being quite unprepared for any display of science, was suddenly thrown off his feet, and hurled backwards with such force that he fell on the sward about ten yards off, and nearly fractured his capacious skull, which was instantly buried in the deep recesses of his conical hat.

"Ghieu!" cried he, scrambling up. "Ho, ho! woe betide you, povero voi!"

He was rushing forward, like a mad bull, to renew the conflict, when a figure stepped from behind a fragment of the ruins, and interposed between us.

"Francatripa!" he exclaimed, recoiling with a growl of surprise.

"Most excellent captain!" cried the thieves, with one voice. "Viva Francatripa!"

"Silence all, comrades," said Francatripa; "and you, signor," he added, addressing himself

to me, "I thank you for giving my lieutenant this rough lesson to treat my prisoners better. But inform me, circumstantially, on your honour, who you are, whence you have come, where you are bound, and what is your business among these mountains?"

"I am an officer on the Sicilian staff, bearing despatches from the commanding officer at Crotona to General Sir John Stuart at Scylla. I trust my papers will be restored me; as they can be of no use to you, sir, and the service of King Ferdinand may suffer by their detention."

"Madonna keep his most sacred majesty!" said the robber chief, uncovering: "your horse and baggage shall be restored to you, and all letters addressed to the good Cavaliere Stuardo, the friend of Naples. Signor, we war not with the soldier, unless in arms against us: like our own, his profession is a poor one, and shame fall on the hand that would pilfer his hard-earned ducats—the wages of sweat, toil, and blood. But the gentleman who accompanies you? By the star of heaven! a knight of Malta! This is sacrilege! Pardon, Signor Cavaliere, this outrage by my people: one for which, believe me, on my word of honour, as a free Calabrian, I am in no way to blame. Gaetano! restore to these gentlemen their swords."

Unbinding Castelermo himself, he ordered our horses to be instantly led up to us.

"Gaspare!" he exclaimed, while grasping a pistol, "thou accursed, deformed Judas, thou piece of an ass! I would this instant send a bullet through your brain, had I another to supply your place: for, truly, there is not in all Italy another such subtle serpent and compound of mischief, to whom I could delegate my troublesome command when absent. But keep out of my sight till morning, Messerino Esop! Signori, he has the eyes of Argus, and is worth his hump in gold to me, so that I could ill spare him. Meanwhile, to make all the amends in my power, this night you shall sup with me, and to-morrow pursue your journey. Please to step this way, gentlemen, and we shall see what my cook has in preparation for us."

He led us behind a lofty mass of the ruins, where heavy green laurels and clusters of ivy and vine overhung the marble blocks and fragments of fluted columns, which yet remained in their original position. A whole roebuck was roasting and sputtering before a wood fire, which cast its red and varying glare on the shattered temple, the waving foliage, the glancing arms, and fierce swart visages of our captors; whose well-known bandit costume completed the striking effect of the scene.

A beetle-browed and bare-legged rogue, clad only in yellow breeches and a blue shirt, the sleeves of which were rolled up, superintended

the cooking; while the contents of a hamper (taken probably from the carriage we had seen some hours before) were spread upon the turf: light pastries, fruit, and a few flasks of continental wine. After posting a few well-accoutred scouts on the neighbouring roads and eminences, Francatripa sent away his band to join the main body in the forest, where several hundred wild spirits served under him. After seeing them off, in a manner which was a burlesque on military order, this formidable chief—who afterwards fought so many severe battles with the French, and whose name was soon to become like that of Marco Sciarra in Italy—rejoined us. I had then an opportunity of recognising in him one of the mutilators of the poor tanner (mentioned in volume first), and I also remembered his face as one I had often seen in the fashionable gaming-houses of Messina.

He was an eminently handsome man, between thirty and forty years of age; and being closely shaved he had rather a more civilized aspect than his rough, whiskered, and bearded associates. Though to us polite and courteous in the extreme, to his band he acted the furious and swaggering bandit: stern firmness and sullen ferocity alone seemed to keep their mutinous spirits in check, and they quailed beneath his sparkling eye whenever it turned on them.

He was habited in one of those richly-laced

scarlet uniforms, which Queen Caroline sent from Palermo to Benincasa, the miller of Sora, and all the brigand chiefs of those provinces; and on his breast shone the star and enamelled cross of St. Constantine: the gift of the same politic princess, who endeavoured to prop the tottering throne of her husband by the support of the brave banditti of southern Naples; just as the Venetians, in 1590, courted the aid of the chivalric Sciarra and his followers against the Grand Duke of Tuscany. A plume of white ostrich feathers, clasped by a golden band and diamond madonna, drooped from his broad hat over his right shoulder, imparting a peculiar grace to his figure. His belt sustained a very handsome sword, poniard, and pistols; which, with a short rifle, completed the arms and accoutrements of this gallant robber: his air and aspect were very different from those of the desperado who, under his name, usually figured in the accounts published in the Neapolitan and Sicilian cities.

We supped heartily. The wine was excellent: and if Francatripa came by it lightly, he did not spare it on his guests. The flasks of red and white capri were numerous and potent enough; but when I remembered the unhappy proprietor, whom we had found weltering in blood by the wayside, it was not without considerable compunction that I regaled on the

contents of his plundered hamper. However, the affair lay between Francatripa and his conscience. Castelermo and I soon fell asleep, under a sheltered part of the ruins which had witnessed the midnight carousal.

When we awoke, the morning sun had risen far above the hills of Maida; our horses with our arms and valises, all in perfect order, stood picqueted beside us: but our late host and his followers had departed, leaving no trace behind them, save the well-picked venison bones, and the ashes of the fire which had cooked it. My mouth was still painful, and a little swollen by the blow from the hunchback: whom I hoped to repay at a future time; but I sprang gaily up to rub down Cartouche with a tuft of dried grass, and shook off the dreams and odd fancies which had floated through my brain: caused, doubtless, by the Capri wine, and the stories related by Francatripa of his mountain friends. My ears yet rang with the exploits of the Abbot Proni, who drove the French from Abruzzi; of Frà Diavolo, the cruel and vindictive bandit of Itri; of the miller of Sora, and Benedetto Mangone, who was so savagely executed at Naples by being beaten to death with hammers.

Mammone of Sora was no ordinary bandit, but a fiend in human shape, out-Heroding in cruelty all the monsters of romance: he could boast of having slain with his own hand four hundred

fellow-beings; he never dined without having "a bleeding human head placed on the table," and in his mildest mood is said to have drunk human blood "gushing from his victims."

These, and such as these, were the brigand leaders of Italy, and the terror of France, before the merciless General Manhes—"the man of iron"—brought the Calabrian war of extermination to a close, by almost depopulating the country.

CHAPTER III.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

PASSING through Maida—a large and substantial town, built on an eminence equidistant from the Tyrhene Sea and the Adriatic, at the narrowest part of the peninsula, and situated among those pine-clad mountains which overlook the scene of our victory and the vale of the Amato—we visited the battle-ground; but nothing remained to mark that glorious day, save the burnt cartridge-paper fluttering about among the graves of those who fell: the mould was yet fresh, and the new grass just beginning to sprout above the great burial-mounds; the sight of which at that moment filled us with sad thoughts. The sun shone brightly, pouring his noon-day glory from above the wooded Apennines across the warm and misty plain; bees were humming, birds chirping, and wild flowers blooming, above those "scattered heaps" where so many brave men were mouldering into dust.

This melancholy train of thought, and the deep solitude around us, were broken by a most unexpected shout of "Hark forward! tally-ho!" coming from a distance; and presently two noble English greyhounds, in full chase after a spotted lynx, bounded from the banks of the Amato, and swept across the plain towards the hills.

"There they go, neck and neck. — Bravo, Springer!" cried a well-known voice; and, crashing headlong through the vine-trellis of some poor peasant, Oliver Lascelles, the general's extra aide, dashed up to us, breathless with a long ride. Oliver was the most determined sportsman in the regiment, and contrived to take his horses and dogs wherever he went, in spite of barrack, ordnance, and transport regulations.

"There go the gallant dogs, and I have no horn to recall them," he cried. "See how the spotted devil doubles!—the water now! Ha! the scent's lost, and Springer's at fault.—What on earth are you doing here, Dundas? Moralizing, eh?—Buon giorno, Signor Marco; happy to see you. By the Lord! had I got that lynx's brush, I would have stuck it in my cocked hat, and ridden with it so to old Regnier at Cassano. Ha! Dundas, at home you never roused such game as that, by the Muirfute Hills, or in Arniston woods;" and the light-hearted Englishman, laughing at his own conceit, hallooed on his dogs till the blue welkin rang.

He congratulated me on my promotion to a company in the Regiment de Rolle, from which I was re-gazetted to my old corps: a double favour, which I had no doubt was to be attributed to the general's favourable mention of me in his despatches, and my good fortune in capturing the eagle. This trophy, by-the-bye, may now be seen in the hall of Chelsea Hospital, in company with thirteen others.

Poor Oliver! he found his grave beneath the towers of the Castello d'Ischia; where the waves roll over the bones of many a bold Calabrian and Ross-shire Highlander. He was barely twenty when he was shot at the head of his stormers.

After a hurried ride over the well-known positions of the third of July, we separated; Castelermo and I to pursue our journey to St. Eufemio, and Lascelles to continue his to General Regnier's camp: he was the bearer of a copy of Sir John Stuart's third proclamation, dated 18th July, and issued in consequence of the barbarous cruelties exercised by the French troops on those Italian royalists who unhappily fell into their hands. In that official document, after a long statement of appalling facts, Sir John reminded the French general that three thousand of their soldiers were prisoners to the British arms, together with many of Buonaparte's well-known partisans. "If, therefore," concluded the manifesto, "such violence is

not put an end to, for the future, I shall not only deem myself justified, but compelled by my duty, to have recourse to the severe but indispensable law of REPRISALS!" This determined threat had some effect on the iron-hearted Regnier, and for a time we heard less of slaughtered peasantry and priests shot before their altars; of nuns and poor country girls torn from their homes and hiding-places, to become worse than slaves in the camps and bivouacs of the French: who were yet entrenched at Cassano, awaiting the advance of Massena's division.

Not choosing to be seen so far out of our proper road by any of our troops cantoned in St. Eufemio, or encamped around it, we took a solitary path across the plain towards the villa; and, as there was no ford, we had to swim our horses across the Amato, in a part where the stream was both deep and rapid. We then sought the shelter of an orange-grove, where, having poured the water out of our boots, we passed the noon-time until the intense heat passed away. It was a still and solitary place, where the silence was broken by no ruder sounds than the hum of the bee, the flap of the plover's wing, the murmur of the Amato, the notes of a shepherd's zampogna, and the faint tinkling bells of his flock afar off on the green and verdant mountains. We remained nearly two hours in that delightful grove, through the thick foliage of which the hot rays of the sun never

penetrated: the shining river swept slowly past us to the sea, with its smooth surface glittering in the sunlight, and the whole air was fragrant with the perfume of the wild flowers blooming among its sedges, and the orange-trees which shaded its rocky banks. The ruddy fruit hung in rich golden clusters above us; and though, from the appearance of some of the trees, the winds of a hundred years had swept their branches, they were yet, in a "green old age," bending beneath their load of produce. The Calabrian knows well that the oldest trees bear the sweetest oranges; those that are soft and juicy, with thin skins: the thickly rinded are always the fruit of young saplings, and are seldom cared for by the orange-gatherer.

Cavaliere Marco—who had not such reasons as I for visiting the villa, and whose knowledge of the world led him to suppose that his presence could, perhaps, be dispensed with—suddenly recollected that he had a gambling affair with Ser Villani, the lawyer (there was only one in the province), and rode on to St. Eufemio, promising to rejoin me in a few hours. Meanwhile I pursued my way to the villa alone; and passing through its luxuriant orchards, reached the terraces unperceived by any of the inhabitants.

Leaving my horse under the portico, I passed through a white marble corridor into the lofty and superb saloon; where, through a cupola of

stained glass covered with heraldic blazonry, the sun poured down a flood of variegated light upon three rows of gilded galleries, and a bronze fountain: the Neapolitan emblem, a winged horse, vomited forth a jet of sparkling water. Save the ceaseless plash of the fountain, the place was silent: no sounds of life were heard.

After a time, however, the laugh of the giddy Annina rang merrily in one of the vast corridors, where she was flirting with the old Greek chasseur, Andronicus; but only to drive away ennui in the absence of her cavalier Giacomo, whom with his party the visconte had sent back to Crotona.

"There can be nothing amiss, when Annina laughs so joyously," thought I; "and yet this great Italian villa, so gloomy and so silent, looks like a vast catacomb by the evening light. Ola! Annina!"

"Ecco, signor," cried the damsel, as she danced into the saloon: she evidently expected a stranger, and could not conceal her astonishment on beholding me; but assuming a prim air, she placed a little finger on her ripe pouting lips, and, with a glance full of archness and mystery, imposed silence.

"My pretty Annina, I am not inclined to flirt just now," said I, kissing her cheek with jocose gallantry, in proof of my assertion: though, indeed, the girl of Capri was attractive enough

to tempt one to be gallant in good earnest. "Where is your lady?"

"My lady, the viscontessa, has gone to confession at the Sylvestrian monastery; old Frà Adriano surfeited himself with choke-priest, and was unable to officiate this evening."

"Tush!" said I, drawing her into a deep alcove, "I mean, la Signora Bianca."

"She is in the garden with the colonel."

"What colonel? Is Luigi here?"

"Signor Claude, you are so impatient!" she replied slowly, while her black eyes twinkled provokingly, and raising their arched brows with affected surprise, she added, "Have you never heard of the colonel?"

"Colonel again! no, no! Who the devil is he?" I muttered impatiently, jerking up my sword-belt, while I ran over in my memory all those I knew who were likely to rival me. "Who the mischief?—it cannot be De Watteville, he is too old; Oswald, he is at Scylla; or Kempt—Annina, tell me, and you shall give me a kiss in exchange for as many ducats as will buy a magnificent embroidered panno to set off these jetty locks of yours."

"A girl of Capri would rather give the kiss without the ducats: it would look so like selling the secrets of the signorina, otherwise;" and while a blush suffused her face she began to sing, with a coquettish air, "O sweet isle of Capri," &c.

"You shall have both: the kiss now, and the ducats hereafter," said I, saluting the Madonna-like cheek of the pretty Italian; and then it blushed red as the ruby wine of her own rocky isle, while her eyes sparkled like the waves that roll around it in the sunshine.

"Signor," she whispered, "truly I wish you well; but beware of the Colonel Almario, who is daily at the villa, and is even now with my young lady in the garden—in the walk; you know it, shaded by the great laburnums."

"Almario! I never heard such a name before—sounds well enough, though: but how the deuce came he here?"

"On horseback, signor: he rides a beautiful black Barbary horse, which Signora Bianca seems to admire more than your dashing grey."

"The mischief she does! Who introduced this colonel to the family?"

"He is a great friend of Father Petronio, the bishop of Cosenza; and all the world allows that *he* is a saint."

"Your world, Annina, is this little corner of Italy. Well, and the viscontessa met him at a *conversazione* at Nicastro?"

"Exactly so, and won from him a hundred pieces of gold: he lost them with so good a grace that my lady was quite enchanted with him; for the more the colonel lost, the more merry he became. San Gennaro! I think he is

a sorcerer, who can coin ducats from vine-leaves. He scatters a handful of gold among the servants every time he comes here! so you may easily imagine how much they are devoted to him. He is either Satan or a rich man, and has a way with him that makes all the men his slaves, and the girls his worshippers: that is, all save myself, signor. And then, such pretty things he says to the signorina, when they play together on their guitars! You would imagine he sat with the Lady Venus herself: but he says the very same things to the old viscontessa, when at cards after supper. O, that Giacomo was returned! I am sure he would not value his ducats or dread his dagger (I know he wears one) a rush. No, he would trim him well with a stout pole for presuming to make so free at the villa."

"I comprehend the hint. But one word more," said I, in a husky voice, while my heart palpitated with anxiety at this relation. "Have you heard aught of the visconte?"

"Only what you must surely know, that he has fled to the mountains: to Francatripa, they say, for abducting a nun. Madonna mia! what can tempt handsome young men to run off with these pale and melancholy frights, when so many plump and pretty women, with good flesh on their bones, are dying for husbands both in town and country."

"Annina, your tongue is again at full gallop. The visconte, then, is not here?"

"No; and yet I could have sworn that I heard him singing a barcarole in the wolf's chamber. God's grace! 'tis a place of gloom and mystery. Poor, dear young man! I hope he may come to no harm in these perilous times, when the hills and woods are swarming with Frenchmen and wolves, idle sbirri, starving peasantry, and desperate robbers."

Stepping hastily and cautiously, I passed through the beautiful garden, which extended from the terraces to the southward.

There was now a rival in the way, whose superior military rank, and apparent wealth, besides his being Bianca's countryman, made him sufficiently formidable to me: but as I remembered her artlessness, her trembling confusion when we exchanged our rings, and her burst of tenderness when we parted, and how she buried her face in the bosom of Luisa Gismondo, could I believe that she would so very soon prove false? Yet I had heard so much of the volatility of Italian girls, their faithlessness and coquetry, that the words of the waiting-woman fell like molten lead upon my heart.

Before advancing, like a prudent general I made a complete reconnoissance, and discovered Bianca walking with this redoubtable colonel, conversing and flirting through the folds of her black

lace veil. She opened it only at times, when I obtained a glimpse of her pure and happy face: her bright eyes sparkling, her cheek glowing, and her pretty teeth shining like pearls in the sun, as its rays flashed between the waving branches and pendent golden flowers of the old laburnums. The long shady walk echoed with their voices, though they conversed in a low tone; and at that moment the sharpening of a handsaw would not have grated on my ears so painfully as did Bianca's merry laughter at the jests of this confounded colonel.

He was a tall and handsome man, apparently in the prime of life: I had a dim recollection of having seen him before, but when or where I endeavoured in vain to remember. He was dark-complexioned, and so much sunburned that I thought he must have seen considerable service. From beneath a scarlet velvet foraging cap, his dark hair descended in curling ringlets; his nose was aquiline, and a pair of appalling moustaches, black, bushy, and fierce, curled under it. He wore a sky-blue military undress frock, laced with silver, and open at the neck, showing a scarlet waistcoat, which was also richly laced; on his breast glittered a medal and the star of St. Constantine; military boots with gilt spurs, completed his costume. A gold belt encircled his waist, and sustained a small poniard of exquisite workmanship; his sabre rested on his left

arm, and on his right the jewelled hand of Bianca.

Notwithstanding the noble contour of this colonel's features, and a certain lofty dignity in his carriage, there was something so peculiar in his uniform (which I failed to recognise) and in the expression of his eye (which I did not like) that, altogether, I did not consider him a *very* dangerous rival; though he whispered to Bianca in a way that was anything but agreeable to me, and she maintained the conversation with true Italian vivacity and spirit of raillery. I was not under the unpleasant necessity of acting eavesdropper long; for, piqued at something he had said, Bianca suddenly quitted his arm and withdrew a few paces; her eyes sparkled with unusual brilliancy, and her brow, wont to be so pale, now flushed with indignation. The Colonel Almario sank upon his knee, and held in his her right hand, which tightly grasped a rose she had plucked but a moment before.

"Beautiful Bianca!" I heard him exclaim, while his voice rose and fell with true theatrical cadence, "be not offended if my treacherous tongue has too suddenly revealed the long-cherished sentiments of my heart. O, most gentle signora! how faintly can I express the deep love, the sincere admiration, which at this moment glow within me!"

"I would give ten guineas to have a good long-

shanked hunting-whip here just now," I muttered, exasperated by this sudden declaration of passion; at which the poor girl seemed the image of confusion: though its pomposity evidently excited more amusement than pleasure.

"Signor Colonello, unhand me, if you please. If cannot—I *will not* be spoken to thus. Ola! Zaccheo! Annina!—here! You have all been bribed! Oh! the treacherous ——"

"For the love of all that is gracious! summon no one." (I really think the fellow loved her; so touching was his tone, so earnest his manner.) "Hear me, lady! I am an unfortunate and most unhappy man. I love you passionately——"

"And noisily ——"

"Cruel! No man can love a woman more. Will you not vouchsafe me an answer? Bel l' idolo! will you not even hear me?"

"No, I will hear nothing while you continue to grasp me thus. Annina! Am I a prisoner in my own house?"

"Give me but this rose: it is a small favour, Signora d'Alfieri, but you have placed it once to your beautiful lips, and their touch has enhanced its value. Bestow it on me, Bianca, as a token that I may yet hope—that, even though withered I may look upon it and say ——"

"Fico! hope you never shall!" exclaimed the spirited girl, as she pulled the rose to pieces, and scattered the leaves upon the upturned face of her

admirer; from whom she broke away, and moved toward the villa with all the sweeping hauteur of an offended Juno.

Almario uttered a very audible oath, and sprang forward rudely to seize her; when, stepping from out the shrubbery, I suddenly interposed between them.

"Dearest Claude!" exclaimed Bianca, in a tone of joy, as she passed her arm through mine; while he of the sky-blue frock and star grew pale with anger: he laid his hand on the hilt of his sabre, and, retiring back a few paces, we surveyed each other from top to toe, with all the stern composure of two melodramatic heroes.

"How now, sir?" I exclaimed. "Would you dare to follow the young lady, and continue this ridiculous scene?"

"I am noble—an Italian gentleman, and my purposes are not to be questioned by any foreigner, especially one of subaltern rank," he replied through his clenched teeth. "Signor, learn that I am a colonel of cavalry in the Neapolitan service, and shall not permit this insolent interference to pass unpunished."

"It may be so: but I do not recognise your uniform." His face grew scarlet, and his eyes sparkled with rage at my insinuation. "You must be aware," I continued, "that I have merely done my duty as a gentleman and soldier in rescuing the signora from your impertinent im-

portunity; and it is well for you," I added, considerably ruffled, "that I have neither a whip nor cane wherewith to chastise you as you deserve."

"And well it is for you likewise, signor. By Heavens! were such an indignity as a blow put upon me, I would destroy you on the spot; and if you escaped that vengeance which my hand must shortly take for this insulting threat, a thousand stilettoes would be on your track! Not in the caverns of Scylla, or the wilds of La Syla—not amid all the guards and gates of Malta and Messina, would you be safe from my revenge."

"O signori!" implored the trembling Bianca.

"Sir, I have very great doubts that you are an officer, but none that you are both a knave and fool to rant in this manner," I replied, with provoking coolness, while pressing the arm of the agitated girl to my side. "I comprehend nothing about those thousand knives of which you speak so pompously, but here is my card, Signor Colonello: I will be at the villa until near noon to-morrow, and any communication with which you honour me will reach me there. I am not to be terrified by the blustering of any man; therefore, sir, it is quite unnecessary to 'get up in your stirrups' when addressing me."

"Good!" said he, haughtily; "I have not my card-case with me, but I can understand this, signor. By noon to-morrow, I must be on the

march to join the chiefs of the Masse in the Upper Province."

"Your regiment is, then, in the neighbourhood?"

"My regiment!" he stammered, while again the flush crossed his olive cheek and haughty brow. "Yes, yes—undoubtedly; and one it is that will be heard of ere long. Signor, you have treated me somewhat cavalierly; which, considering the difference of our rank and years, I deem considerable presumption on your part: but you British behave so to all foreigners. Ha! that *I* should colour at the taunts of a mere boy!—I, who have heard more bullets whistle in a week than he has done since he first girt on a sword! Behold this medal!—on the ramparts of Andria, I tore it from the breast of the traitorous Count of Ruvo, whose savage followers, giving all to fire and sword, made an earthly hell of beautiful Apulia. Ha! boy, you never witnessed such a leaguer as that."

He jerked his sabre under his arm, bowed profoundly to Bianca, and was swaggering haughtily away, when I followed him.

"Sir, then you will not grant me a meeting?" He wheeled sharply round, and muttered, in a fierce and rapid whisper,

"When a horn sounds over the lawn this evening, I will be awaiting you on the road which leads to the ruined hospital of the Maltese

knights. Fail not to come; as a recourse to arms can alone decide now, whether you or I shall possess this girl and her ducats."

"Enough!" said I, scornfully, and we separated.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HORN SOUNDS.

I LED Bianca into the villa, where she flung herself upon a sofa, and, overcome with excitement, gave way to a passion of tears. I very naturally seated myself close by, to console and pacify her.

"Dear Bianca, this is quite foolish, now!" said I, putting an arm gently round her: "why are you weeping?"

"This colonel—this Almario——"

"Upon my honour! Bianca, I shall send expressly to the camp for Bob Brown, my groom, to horsewhip him, for making you weep thus. He is unworthy my own——"

"O no, no!" she exclaimed, weeping very bitterly; "I do not wish Signor Bob Brown to be killed on my account. But promise me, dear Claude, that you will never seek or meet him in a hostile manner," she added, looking up, and

smiling so imploringly, that I quite forgot what I meant to say, and so kissed her in my confusion.

"Claude," she continued, taking both my hands in hers, and looking me full in the face, with her clear and brilliant eyes,—"Claude, promise me that you never will. Ah! my heart would break—it would—it would, indeed, if blood were shed on my account."

"Well, then, dear one! I will never seek the presence of the colonel. But the service, you must be aware—my character—O, the devil!—let him beware how he summons me!"

"Swear it on this Agnus-dei!" said she, taking a little bag of perfumed satin from her bosom. To please her, I kissed the amulet which reposed in so adorable a place, and the innocent girl was satisfied.

"When we are married, I will cure her of all this nonsense," I thought, and ratified the treaty of peace on her flushed and dimpled cheek.

"And now, caro," said she, in a soft, low voice, "I have a great secret to entrust you with. Of course you know all about poor Luigi's wild adventure?"

"My bones ache at the recollection thereof; I narrowly escaped hanging, shooting, and drowning: all of which were proposed in turns by a little hunchbacked fellow, a follower of Francatripa, who chose to make himself very active on

the occasion. And do you know, Bianca, that I was immured in the thieves' cage at the end of the town prison: a good joke, is it not?"

"I heard it all from Annina, whose last love-letter from Giacomo (written, of course, by an itinerant scrivano) was filled with a history of the affair. O, the madness of my dear and foolish sister! How bitterly I wept for and deplored it! Believe me, Claude, had an Italian cavalier been put into that horrid cage, his soldiers would have set the town on fire: but you, British! oh, you take some things very quietly. Yesterday a mounted sbirro brought me a letter from my sweet little friend Luisa Gismondo, who is with her father in the camp at Cassano. O, what dreadful things she tells me of! And Massena, that very bad Italian, he is gathering together an army, who boast that they will soon clear Calabria of the British."

"But where is Luigi now?"

"Just behind you, signor, and most happy to congratulate you on your promotion. I saw it in the *Messina Gazette*," said the visconte, coming from the recess of a window, where, unseen he had been a smiling spectator. Grasping my hand, he continued, "How I rejoice that you escaped from the villanous Crotonians. On my honour! Dundas, nothing but fear for my poor Francesca restrained me from putting back to save or avenge you: and we all imagined those

base paesani would have respected your uniform and character——"

"No more apologies: but say, how does the Signora Francesca?"

"Indifferently, indeed. She bemoans her degraded situation incessantly (here Bianca reclined her head on my epaulette, and sobbed audibly). Torn from her convent, to which she dare return no more, she is still a nun; and, until her vows are dispensed with at Rome, I cannot make her my wife. I now see that her position is deplorable, and hourly wish that I had been less rash: but what will not a wild spirit dare, when love leads, and the fiend prompts? I have, perhaps, blighted her prospects for ever, and placed myself in most deadly jeopardy: every hour increases our peril! The Bishop of Cosenza (so famous for his pretended piety) has taken up the matter hotly, and placed us under the ban of the church; while, armed with warrants, procured from the Grand Criminal Court at Palermo, his sbirri, aided by those of that old blockhead the Barone di Bivona (who owes me a thousand sequins, lost at Faro), are searching all Lower Calabria for us: I expect them here every hour. King Ferdinand, anxious to flatter our priesthood and please his bigoted subjects, has declared himself my enemy, and we dare not venture to Sicily, even could we reach its shores: the commissaries of the townships are everywhere on

the alert, and we could never, unless escorted by some armed followers, embark on the Calabrian seas.

"To pass into the Upper Province would only redouble the danger: Francesca would become the prey of the bishop, or the brutal Massena; who would, undoubtedly, order me to be shot. Ha! the French have not forgotten certain exploits of mine, when I first unsheathed my sword beneath the walls of Altamurra, on that great day when, on the eve of battle, Ruffo performed high mass before the whole Calabrian line.

"I never dreamt that the toils of my adversaries would close so tightly round me! But the villa is well provided with lurking-holes, and I have little doubt of being able to baffle completely any band that may come in pursuit of us here. Were my old sbirri under its roof-tree—were Benedetto del Castagno, Marco of Castelermo, and my trusty Giacomo by my side, I would yet shew them that the Visconte of Santugo was not to be hunted like a wild boar. No, by the gods! I would make good the house against the bishop's rascals, though backed by the papal guard. San Gennaro! rather than surrender, I would blow it into the air, and flying to the Grecian isles, there hoist the red banner of piracy, as many a reckless Italian noble has done before." His eyes glared, as black eyes only do: he

laughed bitterly, showing his white teeth beneath the sable moustache, and he panted rather than breathed, as he continued, "Our king, Monsignore Macheroni, should remember the feeble tenure on which he holds his tottering throne, and be wary of raising enemies in this last stronghold of Italian independence. Palermo will not always have a British fleet to protect its walls from the cannon of France: withdraw your frigates from the straits of the Faro, your red coats from the ramparts of Messina, Milazzo, and Syracuse, and the power and throne of the lazzaroni king will fall prone to the earth, like a house of cards!"

"Hush! dearest Luigi," exclaimed his timid and terrified cousin, when a pause in this long tirade permitted her to speak. "This is all treason, every word; and you know not who may be within hearing."

"If there are any within hearing who would prove false to the race of Santugo, I would crop their ears like base Jacobins, and then bore their tongues with a hot bodkin, that they may the more glibly tell their story at Palermo. Corpo di Baccho! I defy and scorn them all!" and snatching a large cup of wine from a marble cooler, he drained it to the bottom; then casting himself upon an ottoman, he tossed the cup to the other end of the apartment with such force, that it dashed to pieces a rich Etruscan vase.

"Dundas, my good friend," he continued, "hot and high words are but a poor welcome to you, after coming so far out of your way to visit us: yet I am so exasperated about this matter—this elopement with my cousin! Queen Caroline, she too has become an enemy. I had the ill fortune to please her eye once, and she could forgive me for any scrape in which a woman is not concerned: you comprehend? In fact, I was quite a rival to Master Acton—your half countryman—the ci-devant apothecary, whom all the world knows about."

"O Luigi, Luigi!" exclaimed Bianca.

"Tush! I tell you, Bianca, that once when I was waiting on the king—per Baccho! what am I going to say?"—he paused and coloured. At that moment the blast of a horn came, in varying cadence, on the evening breeze: I started at the expected signal.

"Ola! what may that portend?" said the visconte, whom it relieved from his embarrassment. "I shall be glad to learn who dares to sound a horn within the bounds of my jurisdiction?" he added, taking up his sword.

"I will accompany you."

"Good: then let us go!"

Glad to have a decent pretext for quitting her presence, I pressed Bianca's hand to my lips with trembling anxiety, while there stole over me a dismal foreboding that we might meet no more.

My promise to her was forgotten: could I keep it? Impossible!

"Luigi, beware of a quarrel; and, dear Claude, for the love of Heaven! curb his rashness. I can depend on *you*," said she, as we hurried down the staircase; and her words sank deeply into my heart. Too well I knew the deadly mission on which we were bound; and the shrill mountain-horn poured another warning blast, which, as it seemed more faint and distant, made us quicken our steps. The visconte's horses stood in their stalls, saddled and bridled ready for any emergency; and, summoning Zacheo Andronicus to bring forth a couple of nags, we mounted, and, accompanied by him, galloped in the direction of the signal, with the purport of which I acquainted my friend, as we rode on.

"Cospetto!" he exclaimed; "then this quarrel is mine. I cannot permit you to jeopard life or limb for any member of my family; of whose honour I, as chief and head, am the defender and guardian. I will in person meet this Colonel, of whom more has been said at the villa than I cared to listen to. He is one of my mother's gambling friends, picked up at that select resort, Father Petronio's palace; and is, perhaps, some barefaced charlatan, who assumes the name of Almario and the rank of colonel."

"But there are many officers of the Masse and other irregular corps, whose uniforms are so mot-

ley and fanciful, and whose names are not borne on any authorized list, that it is impossible to say what he is."

"True; but time shall prove all: and I——"

"Santugo! it was to me, and with me alone, that defiances were exchanged: I cannot permit another to fight in my quarrel."

"But the quarrel is my pretty Bianca's, and I am her only kinsman."

"And I her betrothed husband: behold this ring!"

"Buono! but I am an unfortunate dog, who would more willingly be shot to-night than live longer."

"And leave Francesca alone — alone in her misery and helplessness?"

"O Madonna! Yet I will meet the Colonel."

"On my honour you shall *not*," I continued, with equal pertinacity. "I must fight or horse-whip him. But if I am winged, or knocked on the head, you can take up my ground, and parade him in turn.—By-the-by, have you not been somewhat rash in venturing forth with me this evening before dusk, when so many enemies are hovering round and ready to pounce on you?"

"I am aware of it: but you have need of a friend; and when I heard this horn blown within the boundaries of my estate, the thought that the base banditti, the ungrateful shepherds, or the carbonari, presuming on my outlawry, were poach-

ing or plundering under the very eaves of the villa, aroused my anger——"

"Excellenza," said Zacheo the chasseur, riding up with alarm in his countenance, "a party of horsemen are now entering the Valley of Amato."

"Armed, too," I added, as, following the eye of the venerable retainer, I saw about thirty mounted men riding, three deep, at an easy pace across the broad and level valley, through which the river wound like a gilded snake; "well horsed and armed. See how their appointments flash in the sun!"

"They are about a cannon-shot distant," replied the visconte; "and should they prove to be authorities from Cosenza, we can still baffle them, even if they come up with us."

"Three to thirty?" said I, inquiringly.

"And what of that? We have good Calabrian cattle under us; the free mountains, the deep rivers, the dense forests, and a bright moonlight night before us: all glorious for a flying skirmish; and we may empty a dozen of their saddles yet before the stars go down."

"And what if they search the villa?"

"I trust to Madonna that the same secret place in the round tower which saved my ancestor from the followers of Carlo of Anjou, will avail my Francesca now: save by terror or treachery, it cannot be discovered.—I hope, Master Zacheo,

that the contents of the holsters are in service order?"

"Most carefully flinted and loaded, excellency," replied the Greek from the rear.

"But these may be neither the sbirri of the bishop nor his meddling friend the barone; and, as they do not pursue a way leading either to the villa or to us, let us avoid them, in God's name! We have business enough of our own to settle before the night closes."

At a hand-gallop we passed the redoubts, garrisoned by part of the Regiment de Watteville, and which they had erected on the day of our disembarkation. On the turf bastions the sentries were pacing briskly to and fro; and as we left the fort behind, the evening gun was fired, its echoes rolling along the hills with a thousand reverberations, and dying away in the distance. The gaudy union descended slowly from the flag-staff; while the fifes playing, and the drums beating, in that peculiar time which is called "the sunset, or evening retreat," awoke the gentler responses of the woods and winding shore, when the hollow boom of the cannon had pealed away on the passing wind: it was "Lochaber no more," a plaintive northern air, often played by our bands when the sun is setting, announcing that another day has rolled into eternity.

Its slow-measured beat, and melancholy notes, are among the domestic or home-sounds of the

barrack-square: then the captain of the day, sulky at being obliged to leave his wine, lounges forth with a cigar in his mouth, and leaves the mess-room to parade the inlying piquet, who are mustered in their dark great coats by the indefatigable sergeant-major: the gates are shut, the drawbridges lowered, and the canteen cleared of its noisiest revellers: the last flush of the sun has died away over the distant hill, and a stillness settles over the whole community, only broken by a laugh now and then from the mess, or by the tread of feet and clash of arms, as the sentinels are relieved at their posts.

I listened sadly as the music faded away in the distance; and truly my deadly mission began to press more heavily upon me than before. Never again might I hear those well-known sounds, and when the same drums were beating the merry revellie and the lark was soaring aloft to greet the rising sun, where might I be? I strove to divert the current of my thoughts, and not to think of it; but the same obstinate and gloomy idea ever thrust itself before me. The affection of Bianca d'Alfieri, my recent promotion, and the chances of still further advancement, now made life seem of some value. I never experienced these depressing thoughts on the eve of a battle, or assault: but the cold-blooded and deliberate preparations for a duel give one time to *reflect*, and reflection may damp the courage of a man

who otherwise would hear, without wincing, a salvo of cannon-balls whistling about his ears.

I thought of my old familiar friends at the regiment, who were, doubtless, at that moment, enjoying their iced Sicilian wines, with the mess-room windows open, while our matchless band played to the ladies and cavaliers promenading on the Marina; and I wished myself amongst them. I thought of my home—my happy boyhood's home—where the Esk flowing down from the heath-clad hills, sweeps onward to the ocean, and I wished the colonel where Empedocles went. But enough of this, or the reader will be supposing I felt inclined to "show the white feather."

CHAPTER V.

A DUEL AND A DISCOVERY.

ALL those depressing thoughts evaporated the moment I obtained a glimpse of my adversary; he was leaning against a tree, smoking a cigar, and stroking the nose of his boasted black horse, whose bridle reins were thrown negligently over his arm. Remembering only his taunts and defiance, his presumption and rivalry, I was ready to rush into hostilities with him, and wage life against life.

He awaited us near the ruinous Preceptory House of the Maltese knights, through whose ivy-clad arches, rent walls, and windows choked up with grass, the last flush of sunset was poured in strong columns of light; around us flourished gigantic green laurels, and many a glittering ilex, which completely screened us from the eyes of any stray passenger, and from the sentinels on Sir Louis de Watteville's field-work.

"I trust, sir," said I, saluting him, "that we have not detained you long?"

"Not very," was the cold reply; "but we must be quick, or this affair will scarcely be settled before dusk."

"You have no friend with you?"

"None, save my usual weapons; but *you* have come pretty well attended. Two gentlemen well horsed and armed to the teeth!"

"His excellency the grand bailiff, and one of his servants," said I.

"My lord, the visconte, rarely rides abroad at present, and I think his presence here is somewhat unwise," said Almario, bowing to Santugo; who was piqued at the observation, and, nodding coldly, replied,

"I cannot permit your coming to blows with this officer, in the quarrel of my cousin. By-the-by, to what branch of the service do you belong?—the cavalry?"

"The irregular troops of the Masse," replied he, with a dark frown.

Luigi bowed and said, "I am the guardian, the only protector and defender of Bianca d'Alfieri; and I claim this quarrel as mine."

"I never meant to insult the Signora Bianca, or quarrel with her family—nothing would be further from my thoughts; but if my respectful declaration of a sincere passion offended, I am most heartily sorry, and will make any amends

to which an Italian gentleman may stoop without dishonour."

Luigi bowed again, in reply to this apology, and reined his horse back a few paces.

"But with *you*, Signor Capitano," continued the colonel, addressing me, "the quarrel is too serious to be satisfied so easily. We have mutually defied each other, and my honour demands redress. Am I to understand that you are the challenger, and that by receiving your card it is at your request I am here?"

"Assuredly, sir!" I answered haughtily.

"Good!" said he, throwing his snaffle rein over the branch of a tree; "then with me lies the choice of weapons. Is it not so, visconte?"

Santugo merely bowed again, but with evident hesitation; and dismounting, we gave our horses to Andronicus, who immediately drew off a little way.

By so frankly avowing myself challenger, I had fallen into a regular scrape: an Italian would, perhaps, have prevaricated; yet I could hardly believe that the Colonel would make so cowardly a choice as to select the national weapon — the poniard. But it was so: after rolling his cloak round the left arm, with the utmost care and deliberation, he drew off his gloves, turned up his right sleeve to leave the hand and wrist perfectly free; buttoned his light blue military frock up to the throat, threw aside his sabre, and

offered me a pair of poniards, saying, briefly, "Choose."

They were daggers of Campo-forte, with elaborately carved ivory hilts, and blades about nine inches long, triangular, and fluted on two sides like bayonets.

"Colonel," said I, "although in acknowledging myself challenger, I may have placed at your disposal the choice of weapons, if you suppose that a British officer will condescend to fight with knives or poniards like a drunken lazzarone, a hired bravo, or any brawling coward of Naples, you labour under an unhappy mistake. I have pistols in my holsters, and with these will meet you on equal terms."

"By heaven! you greatly over-rate my good nature, if you imagine I will engage you with any weapons save those of my own choosing. Any other Neapolitan would have dispatched this business, by bestowing three carlini on some bold lad of the knife to tickle your ribs in the dark."

"Your language is not that of an officer."

"We fight with poniards, or not at all!"

"Must this be?" I asked Santugo.

"Formal duels are seldom fought in Italy: secretly or openly, the knife generally ends all disputes," replied the visconte; "but the challenged usually has the choice of weapons in all countries. Castelermo, a great authority in these matters, has—but I am astonished that Colonel

Almario, as a soldier and a gentleman, should resort to this vulgar and antiquated mode of settling disputes."

My friend seemed under considerable anxiety on finding that I had fallen into such a dilemma—about to fight with a murderous weapon in the management of which I was totally unskilled.

"Captain Dundas, you had better make up your mind," said Almario, with a sneering aspect; "or our meeting may be ended in the dark like those of the bravos you so greatly despise."

"Sir!" I replied sternly, "I am not ashamed to acknowledge my ignorance of the management of this pig-butcher's weapon, and so—"

"So decline the contest?"

"No!—far from it; but I will meet you with my sabre or pistols."

"I will accept of neither; being determined to slay you: so if you stand not on the defensive, I will rush on and end the matter by a single blow."

This threat put an end to all further negotiation, and I felt the devil stirred up within me.

"For God's sake be wary!" whispered the visconte, as Zacheo bound a horse-cloak round my left arm; "keep the guard well up to protect your face and breast, and watch his eyes with the acuteness of a lynx."

"Remember this ring," I muttered hurriedly (assassination now seemed certain); "it is our

poor Bianca's—and if anything happens—you understand me?"

"No—no—not I—if aught untoward happens, by the blood of San Gennaro! the colonel shall cross his blade with mine:" and he left me.

Standing now about twelve yards distant from my enemy, I felt not unlike a recruit when a loaded firelock is first placed in his hands: I knew not what position to assume, and was only restrained from protesting against the combat, by dread of the triumph such a course would afford to Almario. He saw my confusion: his dark eyes glittered with malice and joy; while my heart burned only with hatred and rage at the prospect of becoming a victim to an uncompromising guerilla, who deemed himself sure of easy victory over my inexperience.

With his hat drawn over his eyes, and his arms folded on his breast, Santugo stood apart, regarding us with a flushed cheek, and a stern, yet troubled eye; while Andronicus had placed his crucifix against a tree, and was praying on his knees before it for my success, with all the energy and devotion of a monk of La Trappe.

The position I assumed, with my hands clenched, my left foot advanced, and my head well thrown back, was rather that of a boxer, than of a combatant in such a contest as that in which I figured. My antagonist bent forward on his left instep, keeping the arm muffled with his cloak before him

as a buckler, while the right hand grasped the upraised poniard, ready to plunge it, to the hilt, in the first unprotected place.

After regarding me for a moment with eyes to which bitter animosity lent unusual vivacity, the colonel rushed upon me like a tiger.

More by chance than skill, I received the blade of the descending poniard in the thick folds of Zacheo's horse-cloak, and—contrary to all rule—before he could withdraw it, dealt him a tremendous blow under the left ear, causing his rattling jaws to clatter like a pair of castanets; when as if struck by lightning, he measured his length on the turf. Though given in a moment of confusion, it was a regular knock-down blow, which would have charmed the English gentlemen of the fancy; but Signor the Colonel Almario was quite unprepared for such a mode of fighting, and seemed in no way delighted with it. He lay for a moment motionless as if dead.

"Glorious!" exclaimed Santugo, while I took the poniard from the relaxed hand of my adversary, whose long curly ringlets and mustaches fell off one by one (as we raised him up), and revealed the shaven chin, close shorn hair, and firm swart features of one well-known to us.

"Now, by all the imps of Etna!" exclaimed Santugo, in a transport of fury and surprise, letting him fall heavily on the turf, "'t is the brigand—Francatripa!"

"Al vostro commando, (at your service)"—replied that personage, bowing with perfect nonchalance.

"Rascal! and you presumed to speak of love to Bianca of Santugo? Carpo di Baccho! I am half inclined to sabre him where he lies, to teach him the respect he owes to noble ladies!"

"Aye do, your excellency," cried Andronicus; "slay him—the impostor! his head is worth its weight in ducats: crush him like a torpedo—gash him across the throat like a lynx! Where, cattivo! have I left my knife? Only think, signor—his villains the other night, burned the village of Amato—plundered the shrine of the Virgin, whose milk is preserved there in a bottle. O horror he broke off the neck and drank the contents!"

"Silence, dolt!" exclaimed Francatripa. "You have discovered me, gentlemen," continued the prostrate robber, whose throat I still grasped; "and what mean you to do now? I am in your power, and there is not a syndic or commandant in the Calabrias but would—notwithstanding that I stand so high in the Queen's favour—give a thousand pieces of gold for my head. However, as it is of more use to me, they shall not have it for ten times that number. Maladetto! how it rings after that crackjaw! Do you mean to make me prisoner?"

"No, Francatripa!" replied the generous San-

tugo, in a voice which, from being sternly slow, became soft and kind; "I am one of the Alfieri—thou knowest me, and knowest too well I would scorn the deed: savage and bloody though all men term you, I have heard many a good and generous trait of your character; and the uncompromising hostility you have ever evinced to France, your high courage and incorruptible patriotism, have gained my admiration and esteem: although at heart I abhorred the cruelties perpetrated by your people on our countrymen—defending our towns gallantly from Regnier to-day, and pillaging them ruthlessly to-morrow."

The brigand, who expected to be overwhelmed with reproaches and scorn, was confounded by this unexpected address; and he became still more so when I assisted him to rise, and restored his poniard, saying—

"Let us be friends, Signor! I have not forgotten how generously you entertained the Cavaliere di Castelermo and myself last night; protecting us from the insolence of your band, and the petulence of their lieutenant. Receive your poniard, and learn to make a better use of it: or rather not to use it at all. I esteem you as a brave man, though an erring one; and trust that the blow I gave you will not occasion you further inconvenience."

"Francatripa!" added Santugo, striking him familiarly on the shoulder, "seek another path than that which leads through the prison-gate to

the scaffold. Carolina has sent to you, though but a mountain robber, the same badge of knighthood with which she adorns the noblest breasts in Naples—the star of St. Constantine. Learn to deserve it and to wear it with honour. Grow wise in time: become honest as you are brave: lead your bold followers against the legions of France, instead of the poor carbonari of our hills, and the peaceful vine-traders of our valleys. Fight only for Italy and honour, and, corpo di Baccho! you will live in history and in song, like Marco Sciarra—re della campagna—and lord of the wilderness!"

The robber seemed deeply affected by our frankness.

"Monsignore Visconte and Signor Capitano," said he, saluting us gracefully, and retiring a pace; "I am not the hardened villain the evil tongues of slanderers would make me. God and his blessed Mother, who read our hearts, know that I have been by stern necessity compelled to witness —ay, and to participate in—many a deed of blood and horror, from which my soul shrank with disgust. Yet there was a time, to which I look back through the long dark vista of many a sinful year" (he spoke slowly and with sighs)—"a time when, in youth and innocence, I sat by my mother's knee in our little cot among the wilds of La Syla, and when she sang to me of the exploits of Sciarra the glorious, Battimello the treacherous, and Mangone the terrible. Ah! how little did I then

dream of following so closely in their footsteps—of being what I have since become! Deeply these songs sank in my heart, and more fondly were they remembered than the Ave Maria and hymn to the little child Jesus, which the same dear lips taught me to chant every night before the humble shrine in our cottage. I am not a cold-blooded and deliberate rascal. No: a combination of circumstances brought me to the unenviable position in which I now stand; roused all the evil passions of my breast, and made me an outcast and an enemy to mankind. My wife was false—her seducer was noble—my knife was sharp as my vengeance — that is my history. The Barone of Castelguelfo was my evil genius: but he did not die. I fled to poverty and despair—thence to crime. How easy is the transition! There was a time—but via! 'tis past: let me recur to it no more, but forget it; as Francatripa the gentleman is forgotten in Francatripa the capo-bandito.

"Remember, excellency, that I sought not the villa D'Alfieri uninvited: I went there on the pressing invitation of the viscontessa; to whom, in this disguise, I was introduced by the Bishop of Cosenza, of whom—but enough! The recollection of what I have been, leads me to love that society in which I once moved as an equal; but from whose magic circle I am now proscribed, as if the mark of Cain were upon me. Between us

crime has raised up a mighty barrier, which neither this honoured badge, the gift of a queen, nor that commission (at which all men laugh as a burlesque when bestowed on me) can level. And truly, though proud of my knightly star, I know too well that it shines with diminished lustre on the breast of a poor Calabrian outlaw."

His voice faltered, and his brow clouded still more; he took his horse by the bridle, and yet paused as if he had something more to say.

"My lord, beware of our mutual enemy, the Baron Guelfo. My people lately intercepted a letter from him to the Cavaliere Belcastro, concerning some Buonapartist plot they were hatching. He has been enrolling an unusual number of sbirri, and reports are current that he intends to raise the standard of Joseph on this side of the Calabrian lines. And, my lord, let the excellent lady, your mother, be more wary in future, and avoid inviting to her own mansion those gamesters whom she meets at the palace of the bishop. Would to Heaven, I had never beheld the Signorina Bianca!—Pardon me, visconte.—Her beauty and innocence have awakened in my breast old feelings and long-forgotten sentiments of honour and love, which all the sins and toils of four-and-twenty years—wretched years of wandering and misery—have not been able to obliterate from the memory of the hapless, the crime-hardened, and heart-broken robber of Calabria!"

He turned aside for a moment to conceal the passing emotion, which caused every muscle and feature of his handsome face to quiver perceptibly.

"Gentlemen," said he, recovering, "you imagined I was completely at your mercy, yet you behaved with a noble generosity which I shall never forget. You might have proposed to slay me at that instant" (he darted a terrible glance at Andronicus), "or to deliver me up to the nearest podestà: you betrayed no intention of doing either; but, had you made the attempt, behold my prevention!"

He placed to his lips a bugle of black buffalo horn, and blew a shrill signal, which made hill and valley, wood and shore, now growing dark and grim in the twilight, re-echo to the sound. It acted like the whistle of Black Roderick in the wilderness. His followers, to the number of twice five hundred men, sprang up from their concealment among the underwood, the dark green laurels, the long wavy grass, the rocks and the crumbling ruins, and crowded around us: a startling swarm of black-browed and ruffian-like fellows, all clad in the gay brigand's garb, and well armed with the Calabrian rifle, pouch, and powder-horn; some with the spoil of the unhappy Frenchmen massacred at La Syla and the villa of Sauveria, but most of them with good British buff-belts, muskets, bayonets, and cartridge-boxes, which on

our landing we had issued, perhaps rather too indiscriminately, to the peasantry.

My friend and I confronted this appalling array with firmness; but old Zacheo grew pale as death: his legs tottered under him, and he sank humbly on his knees, while the memory of the fatal words by which he had urged us to despatch Francatripa, caused a cold perspiration to come over him.

"Signori, behold my followers, those free foresters of St. Eufemio, whose fame is so terrible through all the Neapolitan territories. During our whole interview they have been around us; so you were all more in my power than I could be in yours. Do me the honour to keep the poniards for my sake; and if ever you are assaulted by a Calabrian outlaw, show him my cypher on the pommel, and his arm will be powerless against you, and the passage free. Yes! fallen though he is, the name of Francatripa finds an echo in every Italian heart; and there is something glorious in that!"

He vaulted gracefully into his saddle, and assuming all his former loftiness of manner, made a signal to his band, who immediately moved off at a running trot towards the forest, led by my old acquaintance the crookback, who now very ignobly bestrode a paunchy mule.

"Buona notte, Monsignore Visconte; Capitano, santa notte!" cried the gallant robber, waving his cap, and putting spurs to his horse.

"A long good-bye to Francatripa, and all his company," I replied, significantly, as he rode away at full gallop: but Luigi, who had also resumed his hauteur, merely gave him a cold bow, and muttered to me—

"Pshaw! I hate these sentimental ruffians. Yet he is a famous fellow."

I preserved one of the brigand's poniards, as a memorial of that strange encounter; but my haughtier friend gave the other as a gift to his servant, who immediately placed it in his leathern girdle. After watching the disappearance of the brigands, as they retired by one of those gloomy gorges through which the Calabrian roads generally wind, we prepared to return to the villa, having now been absent two hours; as we remembered how great would be the anxiety of the timid Bianca for our safety.

CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVAL OF THE PHILISTINES.

It was now night, and the stars were shining in the dark blue sky; the lights from the tents and huts within the field-work sparkled amid the deep gloom which involved the lower parts of the shore, and shed red streaks of uncertain radiance on the black heaving waters of the bay. The moon, like a gigantic silver shield, began slowly to show its white disk in the direction of the Lipari Isles, and to throw a brightening ray of pallid lustre from the level horizon to the shingly beach of St. Eufemio.

"Excellency," said Andronicus, cantering up to us, "there are armed horsemen crossing the Amato, and riding straight upon our path. They may be Castel-guelfo's men: his people are not with the Masse. Shall we meet them or turn aside?"

"The former of course," replied the imprudent

visconte: "why, am I to turn aside my horse every time a mounted man appears on the road? Let us once be past yonder post, and we are safe within the bounds of my own territory."

The Greek made no reply, but reined in his horse, and fell into our rear again; yet I perceived him unbuttoning the flaps of his holsters. Our path lay along the skirts of the forest, and we rode unseen under the deep shadow it cast across the path: but the bright moon revealed the dark outline of several horsemen, posted at a spot where the road crossed the river; which glittered like a broad belt of silver in the dancing beams, when its current, emerging from the depths of the wood, swept through the illumined plain. The strangers were thirteen in number, and all well armed with pikes and carbines; except one, who, by his drawn sabre and the plume in his hat, appeared to be an officer. By their equipment, we knew them to be a party of the Loyal Calabrese Masse; and we paused to reconnoitre them before pushing our horses across the stream.

"Who are you that bar our way in this manner?" demanded Santugo.

"The bearers of a message to his Excellency the visconte; who, I presume, now addresses me," was the reply.

"A troublesome one, if it requires thirteen men to deliver it. Who sends it?"

"The most reverend father in God, the Lord Bishop of Cosenza, president of the grand criminal court at Palermo," was the formal reply. "Resistance is madness. Surrender your sword, Monsignore."

"To whom?" asked Santugo, with fierce surprise.

"The Barone di Bivona."

"The hereditary bailiff surrender to a mere barone of his province! Never, by Heaven!" exclaimed the visconte, drawing the sword which, as an officer of the Free Corps, he wore continually. "Follow me, Claude! Zacheo, forward and at them. I will not be captured tamely within the bounds of my own jurisdiction. On! and cut a passage through them."

Although not quite so rash and hot-blooded as my Italian friend, I had no time for reflection; but, following his example, drew my sabre, and, despising the Masse as all our army did, we dashed through the Amato, splashing the sparkling water on every side, while a volley from twelve carbines whistled about our ears. I lost an epaulette by one shot, and had my right cheek grazed by another, but luckily no harm was done; and, charging three abreast, we fell upon them pell-mell. I contented myself with acting strictly on the defensive, and used my sabre so expertly in guarding my head, limbs, and body, that I was invulnerable; but Santugo, whose inherent Italian

ferocity now burst forth without control, laid open the cheek of one poor wretch, threw a second from his horse with a thrust, and, dealing a sweeping back-stroke at them all, pushed forward at full speed.

Andronicus, who was armed with a heavy couteau-de-chasse, which his sire had wielded in the wars of the gallant Conte di Leyda, after laying about him like his namesake at Tyre, followed his master's example; which I, too, was not slow in imitating.

The skirmish was one which I did not in the least relish, being aware that I stood an excellent chance of receiving a shot or a pike-thrust, without gaining an atom of honour; and that a severe reprimand, perhaps a court-martial, would be the consequence, if our general learned that I was prowling about like a wandering knight, and brawling with the constituted authorities, when I should have been riding, post-haste, with the papers which M'Leod so carefully prepared for his perusal—and for which our ambassador at Palermo was no doubt waiting with the utmost impatience.

The provincial horses are famous for their strength and speed, and Santugo's cattle carried us across the country at a tremendous pace. We were closely followed by the exasperated troopers of the Masse, who now and then fired a shot after us, by way of giving us a relish to our ride.

"Which way, visconte?" cried I.

"To the villa: it is our safest—our only halting-place. The mountains are too far off."

"By Jupiter! I feel half inclined to turn and show fight, if they continue to fire at us thus."

"Would to Heaven and San Ugo, that Giacomo and any four of my old sbirri were here!" exclaimed the visconte, as he fired his pistols at random. The last shot *told* (as we say) effectually. A cry was heard: I looked back for a moment, and saw by the moonlight a man rolling in agony on the road, while his horse was rushing to the rear at full gallop.

"It is no sinecure being on the staff here, truly," thought I, as we pulled up in the quadrangle of the villa, after having distanced our pursuers by two miles.

The gruff clamour of male voices swearing in most guttural Neapolitan, the shrill cries of women, and the confusion reigning within the mansion, announced to my friend that the enemies of his peace had penetrated to the very centre of his household; armed equally with carnal and legal weapons, warrants of the church and state, and assisted by the followers of Bivona, who wore the red cockade of the Masse.

"Francesca is lost, and for me nothing now remains but to die! Oh! my cousin—my love—my wife, I alone am guilty!" exclaimed Santugo, in a piercing voice, as he leaped from his horse, drew his sword, and rushed up the marble stair-

case towards the apartment where the greatest uproar seemed to reign.

The chamber which had concealed the fugitive from the field of Benevento, in the days of Charles of Anjou, had not availed his descendant now. Dragged forth from the vault below the round tower, we beheld the unhappy Francesca, almost inanimate from terror, in the hands of two rough-looking fellows who wore the bishop's livery: a kind of monkish garb, with which their black cross belts and cartridge-boxes, and flaming scarlet cockades, but ill accorded. Overcome with shame and horror, the poor girl drooped like a crushed flower in their rude grasp.

Never was I so much struck with her resemblance to Bianca. She had the same placid brow, the same clear and brilliant eyes, the same exquisitely gentle expression and classic contour of face, which had gained these lovely sisters the soubriquet of the three Italian Graces. But now, alas! her features wore the hue of death, and appeared yet more ashy when contrasted with the heavy masses of black curls which fell in disorder over her shoulders; her teeth were set, and her eyes glared with an unnatural lustre.

With all the tenacious energy of one who struggles for life, she clung to the satin skirt of the viscontessa, whose right hand yet grasped a suite of cards, whilst her left was filled with counters. The old lady was quite paralyzed.

On the other side clung Bianca, almost sinking with terror, and surveying, with restless and tearful eyes, the fierce group of armed men who thronged the apartment.

"Heaven!—O Heaven!" exclaimed Francesca, in piercing accents; "save me, dearest Signora—my aunt—my second mother—save me! Let me not be torn from my father's house by these frightful men! O misery! what have I done? O for my father's arm to shield me now! But he died in Apulia. Luigi, Luigi, save me, or I am lost to you for ever! Luigi, anima mia!"

What a voice she had! Never did that common, but most endearing epithet of Italian love sound so soft, so thrilling, to my ear. She was free, almost ere the words had left her pallid lips. Santugo struck down both the men who held her, and the flashing of their pistols in his face only served to increase his fury. Bearing her to the other end of the room he defied them to come on, with a chivalric rashness not often possessed now by his countrymen.

They were not slow in accepting the invitation: their courage—as usual with the "swinish multitude"—being increased by their numbers, they pressed forward with clubbed carbines and fixed bayonets, and a sharp conflict ensued. Feeling certain that Santugo would be worsted, I forced a passage to his side, and endeavoured to beat back

the assailants with my sabre; and now came the tug of war.

Francesca had swooned, and hung like a piece of drapery over Luigi's arm; the viscontessa implored mercy for her, whilst Bianca buried her face in the bosom of Anina, who lent her powerful voice to swell the clamour: reviling the intruders, and encouraging us to slay them without mercy.

The outcries of the assembled household, together with the clank of heavy boots, the clash of weapons, the snapping of pistols, the groans and cries of the wounded, and the imprecations of the troopers, and, added to this, my own voice calling fruitlessly on the assailants to fall back, to desist, made the lofty chamber seem a very pandemonium. Sometimes a pistol-shot filled the place with smoke: one ill-directed ball shattered the chandelier, scattering the wax-lights, and involving us in comparative darkness; after which, I believe, we all laid about us at random. Another ball stretched on the floor the venerable Andronicus, who had just come to our assistance, and was cutting away among the buskinned shins of the enemy, using his sharp couteau like a scythe.

For a time I merely used my sabre in defending Luigi and the unhappy girl, who hung insensible upon him; but finding that our numerous antagonists were repeatedly having recourse to fire-arms, and that our safety was, consequently, more endangered, I slashed a few adroitly across

the fingers, cleft a slice from the buffalo-head of a sbirro, and might have performed many more exploits, had not Castelermo at that moment burst in amongst us, holding a lamp aloft in one hand, and his sword in the other.

"Basta! on peril of your lives, hold all your hands, or, by San Ermo, I will drive my sword through the body of the first who strikes!" cried this formidable cavalier, with the voice of a stentor. "Croce di Malta! has hell broken loose, or are ye mad? What! Italians fighting like wild wolves, while so many Frenchmen are yet on this side of the Alps? Sheath your sword, Santugo—back Signor Claude: shame upon you all!"

On hearing this determined threat, and beholding the Maltese cross, the troopers of the Masse shrank back respectfully: but the furious visconte, whom the protracted conflict, the helpless state of Francesca, and a wound he had received, had worked up into a perfect frenzy, yet defied them once more to the encounter; and fear of abandoning his charge, even for a moment, alone restrained him from rushing upon them.

"Anathema! a curse upon ye, cowards!" he exclaimed; "away from my house, or abide the consequences! Corpo di Caio Mario! O that the thrice villainous Bishop of Cosenza, or his contemptible minion di Bivona were here, to receive at my hands the reward of all this outrage!"

"I am here, excellency," cried the tough old

barone, bursting through the throng, and confronting the fiery Santugo.

He was a thickset, hard-featured man, and wore the scarlet cockade and scarf of the Masse, with a military sword and buff belt; though otherwise he was attired as a civilian. His gray hairs glistened in the light; he bent his keen, hollow eye on Santugo with a stern careworn aspect, and his sword flashed as he stood on his guard with the air of a perfect fencer. With eyes absolutely blazing with animosity, the visconte was rushing upon him; but faint with loss of blood, he reeled, fell upon the floor, and lay still, without signs of life. His mother uttered a piercing cry: Bianca covered her face, and knelt beside him. I, too, thought him dead: his classic features expressed all that combination of mental and corporeal agony, stiffening into rigidity, which the pencil of Guido Reni has so powerfully portrayed in some of his works.

In the confusion which the visconte's fall occasioned, the bishop's officials easily possessed themselves of the inanimate Francesca, and bore her away in a close carriage. I was disposed to interfere, but Castelermo grasped my hand.

"Signor Claude," said he, "I honour the sentiment which prompts you to defend this unhappy lady; but contending in her favour is to fight against the Church, whose cause is ever the

most popular in Italy. The consecrated bride of God, sworn to Heaven at the blessed altar, D'Alfieri cannot make her his either by force or fraud. For the bosom of a lover she has left that of the Church, and back to it she must return; to be chastened and mortified, but I trust not abandoned in the flesh! No, the days when that dread phrase was used have passed away. Had Santugo been more religious and less rash, her vows would have been dispensed with in the usual manner, and she might have been his happy bride; but *now*, alas! after all that has passed, they must part to meet no more. The dungeons of the castle of Cosenza, or the still more horrible vaults of Canne, must close over her, and, perhaps, for ever. Madonna, be merciful to her soul!"

The voice of Castelermo faltered, as he deplored the miseries to which the wretched Francesca would be subjected by his bigoted and superstitious countrymen. With these miseries I was then unacquainted, as I knew not the secret horrors those living tombs of Canne were yet to unfold to me, and was ignorant of the cruelties which were too often practised within the walls of continental convents; where a system of domestic persecution had replaced the greater terrors of that mighty engine of ecclesiastical tyranny, the Holy Office, whose punishments for broken vows were founded on those to which the Roman

vestals were sentenced by the law of Tarquinius Priscus.

The bishop's followers having departed, the Barone di Bivona collected his horsemen and withdrew; threatening, however, to call the visconte to a severe reckoning on some future day: indeed, his dangerous wound and Castelermo's intervention, alone prevented his being carried off prisoner, as the bishop's warrant included him in the charge of sacrilege; but events which soon after occurred prevented that prelate from troubling him again about the matter.

Bivona had been despatched with thirty horsemen from the army of the Masse, in pursuit of two fugitives suspected of treason and of tampering with the enemy; and as he passed southward had been requested by the bishop to assist in the capture of Francesca, whom for certain reasons, yet to be explained, that pious prelate was most eager to have in his power. The baron departed for Jacurso in pursuit of the runaways; but our unlucky acquaintance with him ended not that night.

The visconte's senses returned on his wounds being bound up; but he nearly suffered a relapse on discovering that Francesca was away, and in the power of the bishop's people. In his ravings he cursed us all; he called for his horse, his sword and pistols, and before day dawned he was in a raging fever, which brought him to the

brink of the grave. Alarmed at his danger, dreadfully agitated by the scene acted before them, and in excessive sorrow for the fate of Francesca, his mother and Bianca were scarcely less ill; so the whole household was in a state of disorder.

Mistrusting the skill of the neighbouring physicians, I despatched a note to the camp for Dr. Duncan Macnesia of ours, who was still with the medical staff. He arrived in a short time, and the visconte was committed to his care. Remembering my encounter with Francatripa, and knowing well how little a brigand's word could be relied on, I applied to the commandant at St. Eufemio for a guard to protect the villa till quieter times. Early next morning, a serjeant and fourteen rank and file of De Watteville's corps arrived. After seeing them quartered, and giving a few orders relative to the posting of sentinels, &c., accompanied by my cicerone, I once more set out, very unwillingly, on my mission to Scylla; congratulating myself, however, that my opportune return to the villa had freed it from a dangerous personage, and Bianca from a suitor so unworthy of her.

The visconte was too ill and too indignant to bid us adieu; but he sent word by Macnesia that we should never be forgiven for having permitted his cousin to be carried off, and that he would call us out the moment he recovered. He said he had

sworn by Madonna, by the body of Bacchus, and of Caius Marius to boot, that I must think *no more* of Bianca; who parted with me in tears, and promised, with her aunt's permission, to answer my letters, notwithstanding his threats. Thus ended my long-wished-for visit to the villa; and the event left me full of doubt and anxiety for the future.

It was evening before we were again in our saddles and *en route*. We hired a goat-herd to conduct us by a short, though unfrequented, road to Francavilla; but it proved a long journey to us: the rogue led us the wrong way, and absconded about nightfall, leaving us among the mountain forests near Squillaci, on the Adriatic side of this land of brawl and uproar.

CHAPTER VII.

ADVENTURE AT THE CENTAUR.

By the way-side we met a poor and aged priest, travelling on foot; he was exhausted with toil, and his gray hair and tattered cope were covered with the dust of a long journey; he had sandals on his feet, a wallet on his back, and a long staff in his hand. I could not ride past him: I, who was young, stout, and active; so dismounting, I marched on foot for six miles, while the thankful canon rode my caparisoned grey to Squillaci. He was a Greek priest, travelling from Rossano, where there were several monasteries of the order of St. Basil; all afterwards suppressed by Murat.

My kindness was repaid by his superior, the old Abate of the Basilians; to whom he reported our arrival in the decayed and solitary town, which was then involved in the gloom and obscurity of night. We heard no sound as we entered, save that of our horse's hoofs ringing on the old Roman

road, and the distant roar of the Ionian sea, as it rolled on the reverberating shores of the gulf—the Scylletic gulf of classical antiquity, famous for the shipwreck of "wise Ulysses;" who, as tradition asserts, with the survivors of his disaster, founded the city.

We were hospitably received by the Abate, who was a true Calabrian and staunch royalist; and he made the purple wines of the province flow like water, in honour of Ferdinand and Carolina of Naples—"il Cavaliere Stuardo, and the brave soldiers of his Britannic Majesty—Evoe, viva!"

As we had ridden our horses at an easy pace, they held out admirably; but seventy miles of such miserable roads as those we had travelled—ways suited only for mules, goats, and buffaloes—were equal to a hundred on level ground. By the warlike operations of the French, the Masse, and the brigands, the rustic bridges were everywhere broken down, and the roads trenched and cut up to hinder the passage of cannon and waggons; so we had to make many a weary detour among the hills, following sheep-tracks, at one time at the summit, at another at the bottom of a precipice: too often we had no better road than the dry channel of a mountain stream afforded; and on such a path it required the utmost powers of spur and bridle, and all the rider's skill, to prevent the horse breaking his knees by slipping on the wave-worn pebbles.

On quitting the monastery next morning, we beheld the ceremony of a military salutation of the consecrated host, by a party of the Sicilian volunteers belonging to Kempt's brigade, then lying there in cantonment.

The host was borne aloft through the streets by the venerable Abate, followed in solemn procession by his Greek basilians, carrying crosses, banners, relics of saints and martyrs, smoking censers and lighted tapers, which filled the air with perfume. They moved to the sound of a low chant; and the whole population knelt bare-headed on each side, as they passed. The Sicilian infantry formed a lane, with the ranks facing inwards—the commanding officer kneeling in front, while the arms were presented—the colours levelled to the dust, and the drums beat a march on the flanks. Castelermo dismounted, and knelt on the pavement; but I, like a heretical presbyterian, kept my saddle: yet the sour looks of the watchful fathers softened when I uncovered my head; for I was well aware that it would have been gross disrespect not to have done so, on an occasion so solemn.

Turning our horses eastward to regain our lost ground, we passed through the village of Jacurso, and the town of Francavilla, crossed the stream of Angistola, and ascended towards Monteleone; whose castled height, and groves of oak, burst at once upon our view, as we turned an angle of the mountain path. At our feet spread the Tyrrhene

sea, calmly rolling, and stretching like a vast blue mirror from St. Eufemio to Castello di Bivona; whilst its waves flashed golden in the sun, as they broke on the distant promontory of Tropea—the Portus Hercules of the Romans. Further westward, the dim but sunny horizon was streaked by the light smoke ascending from the peak of Stromboli, nearly fifty miles distant. Around us the country was like a beautiful garden: the maple, the vallonia oak, the dark sepulchral cypress, the wild acacia, the towering pine, the pistachio, the sweet-chestnut, and the walnut-trees, all displayed their varying foliage on the lowlands; while the quivering aspen and evergreen oleander waved their leafy branches from the sandy rocks. Sheltered by graceful weeping-willows and lofty Judas'-trees, little cottages peeped out on the green hill sides; whilst the ruddy orange, the golden-apple, the pomegranate, the almond, the grape, and the plum, were flourishing around in glorious luxuriance beneath the warm light of an unclouded sun.

Spangled with myriads of flowers, the green and lofty hills reared their verdant or wooded summits to the azure sky; numerous flocks browsed on their sides, beneath the shepherd's care, and the cawing rooks wheeled in airy circles around them. We were always greeted with a wave of the hat by the guardians of this modern Arcadia; who lay basking on the grassy

sward, or sat beneath the brow of an ivy-clad rock, or a shadowy tree, where they had slept away the night in their rough tabarri. Each had by him his keen-eyed wolf-dog, courageous in spirit, strong, muscular, and beautiful in form, with bushy tail and long hairy coat whiter than snow. These dogs watched alternately the browsing herds, the twittering birds, and the dark eyes of their indolent masters; who spent their solitary hours in smoking home-made cigars, sucking liquorice root, carving cudgels, scraping reeds for the zampogna, or improvising their mistresses on the three-stringed guitar.

The breeze from the Tyrrhene Sea swept over the fertile shore, making the morning air delightfully cool and agreeable; but when noon approached, we were glad to halt at Monteleone, until its fierce glow and suffocating closeness had passed away.

Monteleone (a marquisate which Buonaparte had bestowed on one of the most famous and favoured of his officers) lies close to the base of lofty mountains, which are covered with the richest foliage during the greater part of the year: they form a part of that mighty chain which runs through the centre of all Italy. Its regular streets and handsome houses, built in the picturesque style of the country, were securely enclosed by a fortified wall, where the bayonets of our sentinels were gleaming through loop and embrasure. On

the towers of its castle, which were half-hidden amid a wood of lordly oaks and pines, the standard of Naples drooped listlessly; every breath of wind had died away, and the air was hot and still: profound silence reigned in the streets, and the white sunny pavement appeared new and strange to us, after riding so long on the green velvet turf of the country. Both piazza and street were lonely and deserted; the citizens were enjoying their forenoon nap, and the sentinels kept close within their boxes.

We put up at an inn, or hotel, over the arched portal of which projected a hideous centaur, holding loft a sign-board, on which a long string of verses informed us that Andrea da Fossi gave the best entertainment in Italy for man and horse. Beneath this peeped out a coat armorial, cut in stone, time-worn and decayed; but the collar that surrounded it bore the Order of the Crescent, instituted by Rendler of Anjou on his conquering Sicily. Above this was the coronet of the Princes of Squillaci, to whom, in happier times, the edifice had been a palace; and, though partly ruined, altered, and transmogrified, it still bore traces of its ancient grandeur.

"We shall be well quartered here," said Castelermo, with a sigh of weariness, as we dismounted; both feeling inactive enough after our long morning ride: "but if Signor da Fossi promises more

than he can perform, why, then, basta! my riding-rod shall cultivate acquaintance with his shoulders. We gentlemen of Malta like not to be trifled with."

The ostlers received our horses, and with much ceremony we were ushered up-stairs by mine host himself (who, indeed, was seldom troubled with visitors), and led into a magnificent room of the old palace: the cushions of the sofas and chairs were of scarlet silk, figured with gold; the hangings were of crimson velvet, edged with the same costly material; the ceiling was in fresco, and the floor of fancy tiles; while the tables were slabs of white or yellow marble, on columns of gilded wood. Above a sideboard, stood a little Madonna in a niche, with a lamp before it, before which, on entering, Castelermo made a most profound genuflexion: we afterwards found it very convenient for our cigars.

Wine and iced water were the first refreshments we summoned; then throwing open the windows, which faced the west, to admit the cool breeze from the distant sea, we drew the dark thick curtains to elude the glaring sun, and each threw himself upon a sofa, overcome with fatigue and lassitude. What a relief I experienced when divested of my sash and belt, and its heavy appurtenances the sword and sabre-tache; and when I exchanged for a light shell-jacket, the tight

regimentals: in which it was no joke to be harnessed and buttoned from waist to chin in a climate so sultry.

Among novelists and narrators, an inn has always been famous as a place of introduction, a starting point, or the casual scene of unexpected rencontres and adventures; and so "Il Centauro" proved to us: we had not been two hours beneath its roof before we became involved in a very heart-stirring affair.

The waiter had cleared away a hasty luncheon, and the glittering decanters of well-iced champagne and gioja, the salvers of cool, refreshing grapes, and little maccaroons sweet as sugar and almonds could make them, were all receiving due justice from myself and cicerone. The sun was verging westward, the air grew more cool, and we were beginning to breathe again; when a bustle was heard at the gate of the inn-yard, and an elderly man, armed like an officer of the Loyal Masse, and dressed in a suit of light green, bare-headed and with his long white hair streaming behind him, dashed through the archway on a swift and powerful horse—one of the true Barbary breed, clean-legged, compact, black as jet, and full of blood and fire. It was covered with foam, and seemed to have been ridden far and fast; for no sooner did the fierce rider pull impetuously up, than the noble horse staggered back upon its haunches, threw up its head wildly,

and then rolled in the dust beneath the weight of its double burden: for a young girl was seated across the holsters. She clung to the officer with a degree of terror and affection, which at once excited our interest and curiosity; and uttering a cry of despair, as their last hope, the brave horse, sank beneath them, she fainted: but the old cavalier, disengaging himself from the falling steed, bore her up harmless, and in a manner so graceful and adroit, that Marco clapped his hands and muttered "Basta!" The days of the Barbary courser were ended: stretching out his long yet slender legs, he beat the gravel with quivering hoof, and protruded a dry white tongue; a spasm convulsed his form, the dark blood gushed in a torrent from his dilated nostrils, and the brave horse moved no more.

"Horses, fresh horses for Scylla," cried the cavalier. "Quick! as you value life—fresh horses!"

"Maladetto," muttered Andrea da Fossi, nonplussed, "we have not had such a thing these three years as relays of horses. When Signor the Marchese di Monteleone——"

"Enough—the old story. Are there British troops in the town?"

"In the castle, signor."

"Blessed be Madonna, then we are saved! Farewell! my faithful Barbary, that has borne me through the hot perils of many a dangerous day:

thou hast failed me now!" said the old officer, turning to his dead horse, and gazing wistfully upon it. A tear shone in his eye: it was the feeling of a moment; other and weightier cares pressed close upon him, and he advanced to the inn-door with the inanimate lady.

The burly Andrea seemed rather unwilling to admit guests who came in such a questionable manner; but Castelermo and I cut the matter short by conducting the strangers into our apartment; while their horse-furniture was pounced upon by the innkeeper, to make sure amends so far for any trouble or expense he might be put to on their account. His wife and the female part of the household, used all means to restore the inanimate girl; after which I had leisure to observe her companion. He was a fine-looking old man, somewhere about sixty, with all the *beau-ideal* of the gentlemanly old soldier in his figure, aspect, and address; his thin hair and moustaches were silvered with age, and his cheek had been well tanned by the fourteen years' campaigning of the French invasion; his coat was laced with silver and girt with a scarlet sash, after the fashion of the Masse, and he wore a heavy sabre of Eastern fashion, which, when he laid it on a side-table, Andrea da Fossi also secured unobserved. So deep was his anxiety, so vivid his excitement, while the young girl slowly revived, that he had not as yet ad-

dressed us; but kept his face closely bent over her.

We became deeply interested in their fortunes.

"'Tis some wild love-adventure, like poor Luigi's," whispered Castelermo: "may it end less fatally! The cavalier is none of the youngest; but this pretty donzella has quite won my friendship."

At that moment the heavy velvet curtains were withdrawn, the bright light of the setting sun poured into the room, and the stranger turned towards us.

"Major Gismondo!" we both exclaimed, now recognising him, for the first time, through the dust which powdered his altered features.

"The same, signori," said he, with a grave bow, and, grasping our hands. "Thank God you are here: we are safe, then: Signor Dundas can protect us—my daughter is saved!" He covered his face with his handkerchief, while Marco handed him wine.

"Poor little Luisa!" said Castelermo. "Claude, saw you ever a girl so beautifully fair? But, in Heaven's name, what has happened? — speak, Signor Gismondo."

"You shall hear, when these people are gone —when Luisa recovers. My tongue can scarcely articulate: patience—but a minute!"

He was dreadfully exhausted and agitated. Castelermo might well term Luisa fair: one ex-

cepted, her face appeared to me the most enchanting I had yet seen in Calabria. Though less showy and stately than the three sisters D'Alfieri, her beauty was, perhaps, more touching and girlish. A tight satin vest, with sleeves that reached only to the elbow, displayed the full outline of her bust; whose whole proportions were equally just and delicate. The thick white lace which edged her boddice, and fell in folds from her short sleeves, could not rival in whiteness the snowy arms and swelling bosom; of which her disordered attire revealed rather more than usual. Her complexion was remarkably pale for an Italian girl: but the arch of her brown eyebrows, the length of her lashes, and the delicate little lids they fringed were perfectly beautiful; her cheeks were full and round, almost imperceptibly tinged with red, and, as Marco said of her mouth, so pretty and pouting, it "seemed formed only for kisses." The girl was a very Hebe! and not more than sixteen. The glossy ringlets of her long hair streamed in the sunlight, like a golden shower, over the shoulder of the old man on whose arm she rested, and who hung over her with all the tenderness and anxiety she merited. After a time she sighed deeply, disclosing a row of little white teeth, pure as those of an infant, and opening her eyes she became at once alive to the scene around her. The vivacity which sparkled in those bright blue orbs, together

with the crimson blush which overspread her face and polished neck, made her appear a thousand times more attractive than before. "It was the hectic of a moment:" it died away. Alas! the poor girl was utterly exhausted, and almost speechless.

"My daughter! have I saved you only to see you perish from fatigue?" said Gismondo, in a faltering voice. "Luisa, look up—'tis your poor father who speaks! Hear me, little one!"

She embraced him closely and burst into tears.

"Luisa!"

"Caro padre, are they near us yet?"

"About three leagues in the rear, perhaps," he replied in a troubled voice.

"And these gentlemen?"

"Our friends, and I trust our saviours! You remember the Signor di Castelermo?"

"O yes; and Signor Claude," she added, in a faint voice.

"May their timely presence and intervention avert that most dread catastrophe, of which even the contemplation is horror."

"You may depend upon us—ay, to the death!" said we both at once.

"You are pursued, I have reason to believe;" added the Maltese knight.

"Yes, and wish to continue our journey."

"Where to, signor?"

"Anywhere to safety: but my poor daughter

would certainly expire with fatigue if we rode a league further. We have travelled seventy miles on the spur without drawing bridle once; save when Luisa's horse fell beneath her in the wilderness of La Syla, when I was compelled to take her on the saddle of my own gallant Barbary. Often since then have we been in deadly peril: when lynxes shrieked, and herds of forest wolves howled behind us—when rivers foamed in front, and the mountain robbers showered their bullets from the rocks—I trembled and I prayed: but only for my daughter; and God—good and merciful—has spared her. Cavalieri! I am very unfortunate: I throw myself upon your generosity; and when did one soldier implore in vain the generosity of another? I trust that, like honourable men, you will stand by me in the coming peril: not for my sake, but for that of this poor sufferer; whom the Mother of Mercy preserve from the fury of those who are tracking her with horse and horn, as if she were some wild boar of Abruzzi, instead of the adorable girl she is. Perdition—let them come! The cowards shall find that Battista Gismondo has a willing heart and able hand, to defend the child that God has given, and the last that war and man have left him." He pressed the trembling girl to his breast: she sobbed convulsively, and nearly relapsed into unconsciousness.

"O my father!" exclaimed she, in piercing

accents; "padre mia, my lips refuse to utter what my heart would bid them say: I can only hang upon your neck and sob like a little child, and kiss your cheek and weep. My father, I have destroyed you."

"Say rather, Luisa, that by casting temptation in your way, I have been the destroyer of you. Peace, peace little heart! Ah! how it beats and flutters!" he added, half playfully, pressing his fingers on her bosom.

"There are those at hand who may soon make it cease to beat for ever," said she, in a faint voice; and, sinking backwards on the sofa, her eyes closed, and the pallor of her hue increased.

"Madonna, preserve my child!" exclaimed the old cavalier, beating his breast, while his eyes gleamed with fear and distraction; for at that moment the noise of advancing hoofs was heard on the hard dusty road that wound down from the mountains. Though the inn stood within the Porto Nuovo of the town, we could hear the din of the pursuers: but it sounded faint and distant.

"Major Gismondo, I implore you to tell us the meaning of all this," said I.

"They come:" replied he, turning round to look for his sabre, "they come; and with renewed vigour, too, to judge by the trampling hoofs. Perdition! all the powers in Italy, or in hell below it, shall not separate us while hand and hilt can hold together: but, O San Gennaro, what has my

poor child done to be persecuted thus? I had hopes of reaching the British fleet; when, perhaps, we should have found safety; but I trust that with you, Captain Dundas, I shall find that protection which your countrymen never refuse to the unfortunate." I bowed, but understood him not.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE AND WAR.

"GENTLEMEN," he continued, when the room had been cleared of Fossi and his household, who were all in an agony of curiosity; "you know me well: I am Battista Gismondo, a major of the loyal Masse, and this is my daughter, Luisa. After the events of these few hours past I can scarcely deem myself the same person: I am bewildered. Luisa is the last of a once numerous family; but my sons—my sons!—they have all gone before me to God: one perished on the walls of Andria, one in the breach of Altamurra, and three in the hands of the French; cruelly and savagely shot as rebels by the Marchese di Monteleone,—whom Madonna forgive! for I never can.

"When that unrelenting commander was attacked by our patriots at La Syla,—where all perished save himself and his aide-de-camp—from the rocks above that hideous gorge I beheld the work of death. It was a scene of thrilling horror.

Within that narrow space, hemmed in on every hand—in front, in rear, on each side, and above—the rifles poured down volleys of leaden hail: miserable was the slaughter of the unhappy Frenchmen.

"The whole vale was enveloped in smoke, and its dark rocks were illuminated by the flashing musketry; the shrieks and yells of vengeance, of despair and death, and the roar of the fire-arms reverberated among the echoing hills; mingled with the crash of enormous stones, which, rent from the solid mountains, and urged by strong revengeful hands, fell thundering on the foe beneath. Few have looked upon such a scene: but I thought only of my sons, and laughed scornfully as the cries of agony—the last agony of many a parting soul—arose from the smoky gulf below me. The measure of revenge was full. Of all that gallant band, the Marchese and his aide-de-camp alone escaped. Brave, resolute, and maddened, he forced his gallant horse up the walls of basaltic rock (which on every hand enclose the valley, so that it seems like a vast pit or well) and, missed by a thousand bullets, he dashed down the mountains unhurt, and disappeared.

"His aide-de-camp, a French officer, young, and equally brave, strove to imitate his example: spurring his horse up the rocks, he rushed from the gloomy dell and emerged suddenly, almost at my feet. How terrible was his aspect! at this

moment I can behold him: the panting horse, with starting eyes, erect mane, and snorting nostrils; the breathless rider, bareheaded and pale—his face streaked with blood—his broken sabre gleaming in his hand.

"'France! France!—vive l'Empereur!' cried he, and was dashing on, when a stray bullet struck his horse; it plunged wildly forward and rolled dead on the turf, hurling its rider at my feet. The next moment my knee was upon his breast, and my sabre at his throat: his sword arm was broken—he was powerless.

"'Ruffian!' he exclaimed, 'would you slay me in cold blood?'

"'As your countrymen slew my sons,' was my fierce rejoinder: he saw but little mercy in my aspect at that moment.

"'Old man,' said he, with a faltering voice, 'if you are indeed a father, spare me for my father's sake, if you will not for my own!'

"'So pleaded my sons, perhaps—but no! they would have scorned to ask mercy of a Frenchman. Enough, young man; with me you are safe: like yourself, I am an officer, and will do nothing that is unworthy of a gentleman.' I assisted him to rise. 'Your name, signor?'

"'Phillipe Regnier, a lieutenant of the First Regiment—the favourite corps of Napoleon.'

"'Would you had some other name than that of our accursed persecutor.'

"'Beware, sir!' exclaimed the other haughtily; 'if you mean Regnier, Chevalier of the Iron Crown, and general of division under the Emperor—*he* is my father.'

"'It is enough,' I replied. 'Young man, he is our deadly enemy: yet I will say nought to which his son may not listen with an unruffled brow; but, as you value life, utter not his name in the hearing of an Italian. You must be aware of the necessity for this.'

"He bowed. To preserve him from the fury of the followers of Francatripa, I conveyed him to my house, which was not far distant. Night had descended on the unfinished work of death, and we retired unseen. The poor French youth was deeply grateful for my care: he suffered acutely from his broken arm and a wound on the head, where a ball had laid bare the temple; fever ensued, he grew worse daily, and was brought almost to the brink of the grave: yet I dared not bring him any medical assistance. Had the secret of his dwelling at my house been noised abroad, his doom had been sealed as a Frenchman, and mine as a traitor: my house would have been levelled to the ground. He had no other nurse or attendant than my poor little daughter.—Signori, spare the tears and blushes of my dear Luisa, by imagining the rest. Both were young, handsome, and ardent: too much so to be thrown so entirely together, and left so much in each other's society;

as our secluded habitation, and my long and frequent absences, compelled them to be.

"I discovered their passion at last: but I could blame neither; having long anticipated and dreaded it as an evil not to be averted. I could not leave the poor French lad to perish on the mountains, and to none save my daughter, in these times of peril, could I with safety and honour to myself have imparted the secret of his escape and existence. Yet I could not restrain a stern reproof.

"'By Heaven, Signor Phillipe,' said I, 'you have not acted well in smiting the hand that spared your life on the battle-field, and has since fostered you so tenderly: by indulging in this passion, which with you is fleeting—thought of but for a moment—you have stung the heart that warmly cherished and saved you from the just vengeance of our incensed people. In so doing, I have placed in imminent jeopardy my life, my honour, and the high reputation of my family for patriotism and loyalty; and this is my reward: you gain the love of my daughter, on whom you can never bestow your hand—the difference of clime, of manners, and above all your political position, forbid it, and raise up a mighty barrier between you. I honour you as a brave youth, but of an accursed nation; I wish you well, and shall ever do so—yet in the name of Madonna, recover your health and rejoin your father's army.'

"'And wherefore, my dear Monsieur Gis-

mondo, is the barrier so insuperable?' said he, starting from the sofa on which he reclined, and taking my hand in one of his; whilst the other held that of Luisa, who hid her blushing face, as she hides it now, behind her silken tresses.—'Better times—Oh, yes! better and happier times are in store for both France and Italy; on whose united throne now sits our Emperor, crowned by the hand of Ruffo, raised by the valour of his soldiers, and blessed by the favour of God.'

"'To the young all things seem possible,' said I, coldly: 'to me, whose heart is seared, whose beard is gray, whose head the hand of time has bared, the future can never be so bright as the past. Believe me, Phillipe, I esteem you highly, and know none on whom I would more willingly bestow this fair bud—the last of my race!—than on thee.'

"Perhaps this was too honest an avowal—too great a concession; but, ere I could retract it, Phillipe exclaimed:—

"'Oh! joy, my dear major; you know not how happy you make me—us—ah! let me say *us*,' he added, drawing Luisa towards him. 'Promise me, good Monsieur Gismondo, that when peace comes: as come it soon must, when we have tossed all the enemies of Joseph into the sea at Scylla, and when France and Italy have become one—and *one* they shall be; for the Emperor has so willed it—promise me that mademoiselle shall

be mine. Oh! good sir, complete the joy of this hour by giving a promise, which I know you will rather die than break.'

"Their upturned faces blushed with youth and love; their eyes beamed with delight and hope; and the fair golden curls of my daughter almost mingled with the raven hair of the Frenchman. It was a picture of beauty and happiness that I had not the heart to destroy: I promised, and signed the cross above them.

"'I will redeem my pledge when France and Italy are *one*,' said I;—'but *when* will that day come to pass?' I added, mentally, on turning away and leaving the happy lovers together. 'Yes, ere that time comes, Charybdis shall give up its wrecks, and Etna vomit water in lieu of flame.'

"In truth I loved the lad, because I had saved his life: for which he seemed sincerely grateful to me; and I could not but admire his courage and heroic enthusiasm, though in the cause of that bad and renegade emperor, whose name is enough to make the blood boil in every Italian heart. At that time I saw little prospect of M. Regnier being united to my daughter: but, as it was impossible to foresee what turn the tide of war might take, I thought it well that Luisa had in the French camp so powerful a friend as the general's son. These ideas might be selfish; but I knew that care and the hand of time were beginning to lie heavier

on me; that I was exposed to the innumerable dangers of continual strife; and that, when God called upon me, my poor little daughter would be alone in the world."

The old officer stopped; he sobbed audibly, and I saw the heavy tears which oozed from his gray eye-lashes, falling on the fair forehead and sunny hair of his daughter. It was a picture. Alas! he heard not, as we did, the distant clang of advancing horses; so much was he absorbed in his story.

"To be brief," he continued, "M. Regnier departed next day, disguised as a buffalo-herd. I conducted him in safety to his father's camp at Maida; where, two days after, the British obtained that victory so glorious to themselves, and so auspicious to Italy. Their foes retired with precipitation, and the bright future which Luisa and her loverhad so fondly anticipated,became enveloped in gloom and obscurity. Phillipe escaped unhurt, but lost the standard of his regiment in that desperate single combat with you, Captain Dundas.

"I belonged to one of those battalions of the Masse which so closely invested General Regnier's entrenched camp at Cassano. Luisa was with me; and, from my tent, she could daily see the sentinels in the blue uniform of Phillipe's regiment, almost within musket-shot. Hourly we were engaged in skirmishes with the enemy, who were soon driven to the utmost extremity. Being

joined by Fra Diavolo, Mammone, and some of the loyalist brigands, and hearing that Marshal Massena was rapidly advancing, the chiefs of the Masse directed that, an hour after Ave Maria on the night before last, a general and grand assault would be made on the French encampment; and an order was circulated strictly forbidding quarter to be shown to any of the enemy. For three days there had been a cessation of hostilities, and our false leaders resolved to fall upon our foes at a moment when an attack was least expected.

"A rocket sent up from the mountains was to be our signal—VENGIANZA! our watchword: but traitors were amongst us; and, fully acquainted with the plotting of our treacherous chiefs, Regnier resolved to anticipate the attack, and overwhelm them with confusion and dismay.

"Ave-Maria passed; one by one the stars began to glimmer in the darkening sky: silently our troops began to muster in their ranks, and many an eye was bent to the gloomy mountains, awaiting the red burst of the rocket. I was bidding a hasty and sorrowful adieu to my daughter, who was doubly agitated with anxiety for the fate of both her father and lover, when the roar of the French artillery opening on our field works from every part of their entrenchments, the clang of their galloping cavalry, and the shout of 'Vive l'Empereur!' as their whole light troops made a

desperate sortie, equally furious and unexpected, made me grasp my sabre, and rush from the presence of Luisa.

"Led by Regnier in person, the French burst headlong on our trenches, and both horse and foot scoured all the approaches; from which the Masse fled with precipitation. Three of our chiefs, many cavaliers of distinction, and a thousand Italian soldiers perished in the slaughter; after which the French retired leisurely within their defences, without the loss of a man."

"Basta! and all this took place but two nights ago?" exclaimed Castelermo.

"But the worst remains to be told. Not Dante's self could describe the fierce longing for reprisals—the wrath, the horror of our people at daybreak. They beat their breasts and tore their hair: they raved like maniacs: they called on the chiefs to lead them against the foe: the air was laden with their shout—it was '*Vengianza!*'

"Anon, there rose a universal cry of treason! and every man looked with dark scrutiny in the face of his comrade. In the midst of this, whilst seated with Luisa in my tent, I was surprised by seeing a hand raise the canvass wall and throw in a piece of paper; on which was written:—

"'If you value the lives of yourself and daughter, fly! A letter from the son of General Regnier, and addressed to the Signora Luisa, was last night found in your tent, and is now lying

before the chiefs in council. They are at this moment deliberating on the mode of her death, whether by the cord or bullet: she is supposed to have acquainted the French with the projected assault of last night—there is not a moment to be lost—away! *A Friend to the Major Gismondo.*'

"I felt crushed and broken to the earth: for a time my mind was a chaos; then it was wrung with the bitterest anguish, while my cheek glowed with indignation and shame. Had I been alone, to have rushed to our nobles and repelled with scorn the insinuation would have been the thought and deed of a moment; but my child made a coward of me: the wild shouts of our lawless soldiery were ringing around us, and our stern chiefs were sitting in council, deciding upon the death of my daughter—my poor innocent Luisa.

"We stole from the camp, procured horses, and fled; but not unperceived: we have been pursued fiercely and hotly, and have passed through innumerable toils and horrors. Our only chance of safety lay in getting on board the British fleet; or under your friendly flag, Signor Dundas. Thank Heaven! it waves over Monteleone; and I trust our pursuers will respect it: but deadly, indeed, must be the purpose of those who have followed us so rapidly, and so far, without drawing bridle."

CHAPTER IX.

POOR LUISA!

Dusk had set in ere his relation concluded, and the exhausted girl had fallen into a deep slumber on his breast. Just as the waiter—who, probably, had heard the whole story through the keyhole—brought in lights, a party of armed horsemen galloped through the Porto Nuovo, and halted.

"Which way, said you?" asked one.

"The Centauro, monsignore," replied a voice: it was that of Da Fossi, our villanous host; and the same party of irregular cavalry we had encountered at the Villa D'Alfieri, wheeled into the inn-yard.

"They come! O, my father—O, my God!" cried the unhappy girl, embracing her parent. "O, Signor Claude!—O, Cavaliere di Castelermo, protect us!"

"My daughter!" gasped the old man. "Ah! the agony of this moment! Signor," he added,

addressing me, "intercede for us. As a British officer you may do much: my daughter, she may yet be saved—spared to cheer the little time that is left me."

"On my honour! major, we will stand by you to the last," I replied, while my heart melted at the old man's passionate entreaties. "Let us close up and barricade the door, while a message is despatched to the castle for the inlying piquet."

"Thanks, thanks, Madonna bless you! you may do much—and yet for what can I hope?" he muttered, with an air of distraction, as he laid his half lifeless daughter on the sofa, and looked round him for his sabre.

"Signor Claude," whispered Marco, in an agitated manner; "I can only contemplate with horror the probable issue of this affair. Be wary of using your sword," he observed, as I buckled it on. "Innocent as the signorina may be, appearances are against her; and the Masse carry matters with a high hand."

Ere I could reply, we heard the following orders by the leader of the party:—

"Surround the house, and shoot all who attempt to escape. Unsling carbines!" He at the same time leaped from his horse, and rushed up the staircase. A trampling of heavy boots, a jangling of steel spurs and scabbards succeeded—the door of our apartment was thrown open by our half-

frightened, half-officious landlord, bowing humbly, with a candle in each hand; and our acquaintance of the preceding evening, the stern old Barone of Castello di Bivona pressed forward, followed by fifteen or twenty well-armed, but motley garbed troopers.

"Traitress! a devil of a chace you have given us," said he, striking his sword on the floor.

"Ahi! protect me, my father! they are come—those enemies of our peace—of my innocent love. Save me! or kiss me and let me die."

"Die!" reiterated her father, in a dreadful tone.

"Surrender all here, in the name of the king!" said the baron, in a loud voice; "in the name of Ferdinand of Naples and Sicily."

"How now, my lord," I inquired, throwing myself forward; "this is a private apartment, and by what right do you make this intrusion?"

"In right of the name I have mentioned. But who are you that assume this air of authority?" he asked, with a frown of surprise.

"What my uniform proclaims: I am one whom you would do well in addressing more politely."

"And your friend is a cavalier of Malta?"

Marco bowed.

"Well, gentlemen, I am a Neapolitan barone, a chief of the Masse, and commandant of Irregular Cavalry; empowered to capture this unfortunate fugitive, and execute upon her a sentence decreed by the chiefs in council at Cassano: the reward

due to treason, and leaguing with the enemy. Signori, well aware as you must be of the utter futility of resisting the authority with which I am vested, it will be wiser to restrain the sorrow of this unhappy parent, than to attempt to defeat the views of justice. The girl must *die!* As for *you*, signor," he added, addressing me particularly—perhaps because I did not seem to care much for his "authority"—"we have met before; and if my followers are again obstructed, a formal complaint shall be sent to General Sir John Stuart, and you must abide the consequence. The edicts of the chiefs of the Masse, are, just now, the laws of the land. Seize the woman!"

The soldiers advanced, the poor father threw himself before his daughter; I started; but Marco grasped my arm, and I observed that his dark cheek was turning pale: he bit his nether lip, and said:—

"Resistance is indeed vain."

"Monsignore Barone," cried the old major, in a trembling voice; "for the love of the blessed Madonna, spare my daughter! By the head of the Pope!—by the bones of the Saints!—by God himself!—I swear to you she is innocent. The child that is unborn—yea, the beatified Mary herself was not more pure. 'T is my daughter," he added, in a bewildered manner; "O, the little creature I have nurtured from infancy—and to perish thus! 'T is my daughter—my child—the

last of *them*—she—pity me, Signor Barone—you are very good—her mother was slain by a cannon-ball at Altamurra—my arms were around her when her soul went up to her Redeemer. My daughter is pure—innocent—innocent as Madonna!"

"Poor man! you blaspheme," said the barone.

"Spare her, signor illustrissimo—have mercy: it is good to do so, and pleasant to the eye of Heaven. Think how you may one day crave it at the throne of grace, when the deeds of this hour will stand recorded against you in letters of fire. Spare her, for my sake! Remember all I have endured and done for my country. Behold these scars gained when Macdonald was driven from Terracina: her brothers have all followed their mother; they have gone before me to heaven—they died for Italy! Remember, monsignore, when Ettore Caraffa, the Count of Ruvo, took Andria by storm, and reduced it to ruins and ashes—remember how I saved your life at the risk of my own; how my boy, my dark-haired Battista—O, my God! the last of five—fought for you, and fell at your feet covered with wounds. I dragged you from the press, through flames and balls and bayonets—ha! ha!—you were then wounded, faint, and bleeding; but you promised, in a burst of gratitude, that if ever you could serve me you would do it, even to the peril of your life. *Yours* I seek not; but the life that I gave—the life of my daughter." Gismondo uttered another sepul-

chral laugh. "The hour is now come, Signor Barone, and I call upon you to redeem the given promise—the life of my daughter."

"Sancto Gennaro!" muttered the old barone, in a troubled voice, as he smote his forehead, "what an hour of shame and agony is this! Give me back the lives of two sons now lying dead in the trenches of Cassano, slain by the treachery of your daughter—hear you that, Maggiore Gismondo?—by her leaguing with the enemy!—Away with her to the verandah, and knot a halter, some of you. Povero voi! entreat me not, vile traitress!" he exclaimed, roughly shaking off the horror-stricken girl, who clasped his knees. "Most unhappily for thee, I remember, at this moment, but too poignantly the loss of my gallant sons. Forward, some of you: seize this unfortunate father; he must not see that which is to ensue. Away with him, and secure the daughter! I would to Heaven, some other than Di Bivona had been sent on this cursed hangman's errand!"

"My sabre! my sabre!" cried Gismondo, wildly rushing round the room, and dashing the chairs and tables right and left in his frenzy.

Seized by many powerful hands, the parent and child were torn asunder: the former was borne away, almost senseless, to a neighbouring monastery; happily for herself, the latter lay in a deep swoon.

"Quick!" cried Bivona; "for Heaven's sake! get this affair over as soon as possible."

"Would monsignore wait till she recovers a little, to pray?" said Baptistello Varro, whom I now recognised as one of the troopers, and who alone seemed to recoil with disgust from the task imposed. "Ah! signor, permit her a little time to pray?"

"No, no, Varro; that would be cruelty: we have not a moment to spare for tears and entreaties. Diavolo! if once she opens these blue eyes of hers, we may be bewitched: there is that in their glance—'t is the mal-occhio!—And *you*, gentlemen," he addressed us, "will do me the favour to remain where you are, or interfere at your peril."

Gladly would we have resisted, to save this poor victim from those stern and unrelenting patriots; but, as our efforts would have been perfectly fotile, and a serious compromise of our own safety, we were compelled to become spectators of the horrible scene which ensued—one, of which I willingly give but a hurried description.

From one of the rafters of a covered verandah, or gallery, which projected on rough wooden columns round three sides of the court or quadrangle of the inn, Baptistello suspended a strong cord with a noose: two red torches, streaming in the night wind, were held aloft, and cast their fitful glare around. The picturesque façade of the

old palace, with the rude alterations made by Da Fossi—its broad eaves, its gloomy galleries, vine-clad columns and gleaming casements; the motley group of wild-looking volunteers, with their Calabrian troop horses, and glancing buckles and weapons; the dark visages of those who bore the poor girl to the place of death; and the beautiful victim herself, with her pale cheek and paler bosom, and the dishevelled tresses of her long bright hair, which the old man loved to stroke, were illumined by the strong red light poured from the torches, whilst a dusky gloom enveloped the background: the whole scene would have formed a striking subject for the pencil of a Salvator Rosa.

Revived by the cool night wind, the lips of Luisa were beginning to move: she sighed deeply. Ah! it was agony to contemplate that beautiful bosom, now throbbing almost for the last time!—She opened her eyes, but closed them instantly, as a torch close bye flashed full upon her face; consciousness was just returning as the detestable cord was placed round her pure and slender throat.

"Madonna—Madonna receive her!" exclaimed Castelermo, as he held his crucifix aloft to heaven. "Mother of mercy, look on her!—O, gran Dio!" he ejaculated, as she was tossed over the balcony.

There was a horrid jerking and cracking sound, as the cord strained with her weight: her blue eyes opened—oh! frightful was their aspect, as

the light of the sputtering torches fell on them; and still more frightful were the distortions of that enchanting form—but for a moment only. There it swung round vibrating, then hung still and motionless; the fair head drooped heavily forward, and the long bright ringlets floated in disorder on the passing wind.

"To horse, and away!" cried Di Bivona; and ere his party had clattered through the Porto Nuovo, Marco and I returned to our apartment, sickening with disgust and horror.

"Basta! let us quit this accursed den, and seek some place of amusement," said the knight. "There is surely some gaming-house or merry cantina in Monteleone. Let us go."

"With all my soul," said I. "Some of the Corsican Rangers are in garrison here. I had a brother amongst them once, and know the corps well, having many friends in it."

"Buono: we shall be sure to fall in with the officers somewhere, at the cafés or the promenade."

We left the inn about the same time that two men of the Campagnia di Morti bore away the remains of Luisa Gismondo in a shell, covered by a pall; around it walked six others, carrying torches, and completely enveloped in sackcloth, having even their faces covered by a black hood, which descended to the chin. They formed a grim and mysterious group, as they wound, by

the light of their links, through a dark and narrow alley, to the entrance of some obscure and ghastly charnel-house.

"And Luisa was the bosom friend of Bianca!" thought I, as their monotonous chant died away. "What a tale of horror I have to tell the family of Alfieri!"

Of the Major Gismondo I shall have to relate more hereafter.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIEGE OF SCYLLA.

NEXT evening we arrived at Scylla: the Scylla of classical antiquity, hoary and worn with the storms of ages, dark with the lapse of years; the stronghold, successively, of the Greek, the Roman, the fair-haired Goth, the swarthy Saracen, the mail-clad Norman knight, the proud Italian prince, the prouder Spaniard, and, lastly, the grasping Gaul. As we approached it, Castelermo bade me remark the roar of the ocean in the caverns beneath the rock; which rises perpendicularly from the water, and is still of considerable danger to mariners. To the ancients it was terrible, on account of its real and fabled dangers, which occupy so prominent a place in the heroic poems of Homer, Ovid, and others; and famous for the loves of Glaucus, and the magic art of Circé, the daughter of the sun (who transformed the beautiful nymph Scylla into that tall rock, which "bulged the pride of famed Ulysses' fleet") and the roar of

whose dogs was so terrible to Æneas and his followers.

Opposite rose the fair and fruitful coast of Sicily, the spires of Messina, and the green ridge of the Neptunian hills; behind which sank the setting sun, whose last rays changed the hue of the ocean from blue to purple: the Straits were studded with craft of every description, from the stately British line-of-battle ship, to the little scampavia, with its red and yellow latteen sail. As we pulled up our horses beside Monte Jaci, to view the splendid prospect, the old tradition came to my remembrance:—

"The Italian shore
And fair Sicilia's coast were *one*, before
An earthquake caused the flaw: the roaring tides
The passage broke, that land from land divides;
And, where the lands retired, the rushing ocean rides."

Æneas, iii.

The roaring of the sea in the cavern of Dragara caused our horses to snort and rear; and the sound was not unlike the cry of some "tremendous pest," or monster, such as Scylla was fabled by the poets of old. But, enough; or the reader will suspect me of that "dull pedantry which finds everything ancient necessarily sublime."

The whole coast bore traces of that dreadful

visitation, the earthquake of 1783; when vast masses of the shore fell into the sea, burying gardens, fields, dwellings: at the base of Monte Jaci lay a mighty piece of rock, which had been hurled from its summit to the margin of the Mediterranean.

"On that night of horrors," said Castelermo, "when all Calabria was trembling with the internal convulsions of the world; when the sea exhaled brimstone, and the whole face of the land became changed; when rivers were choked up by the fall of the mountains, or rolled back upon their source; when cities, engulfed in yawning earth, were lost for ever; when hills became lakes, and the last day of dread and judgment seemed at hand;—the ocean heaved up its waters to the height of twenty feet; and, rushing on the coast for the distance of three miles, swept back into the abyss two thousand four hundred and seventy human beings, who had fled to the shore for safety from the crumbling cliffs and falling mountains. The heavens seemed all in flames, and the ocean rolled on, wearing the red tint which the light reflected on it; the promontory of Campala fell into the waves, and not a fragment of it remained: Scylla was split to its foundations, and the solid towers of its castle flung from the rock upon the town below. The eagles screamed and grovelled panting on the ground; whilst the wolves howled with affright in the recesses of the woods. All

nature seemed convulsed, paralyzed, and trembling on the brink of destruction."

The castle was the property of Castelermo's uncle, the Cardinal Ruffo, Prince of the ancient house of Ruffo Sciglio, and a man of political and military celebrity: it was his principal residence, until ruined and dismantled on his defection; but the skill of French engineers had restored it to more than its former strength and glory. On the south side lay the snug little town, terminated by the castle rock; the cliff descending sheer down to the sea, which rolls two hundred feet below. An ample tri-colour waved heavily over the dark grey keep; and the glittering arms of the sentinels flashed in the setting sun, over the ramparts and embrasures, through which protruded the muzzles of heavy cannon: their fire, during the siege, had scared away all the inhabitants of the town below.

Evening deepened around, as we advanced; and we soon saw the light in the Pharo di Messina shed its tremulous rays across the rushing and now dark waters of the Strait.

The garrison of the French marquis was completely invested, on the land side, by the brigade of my countryman, Colonel (latterly Lieutenant-General Sir John) Oswald; who, at the head of the 20th and 58th Regiments, with five companies of De Watteville's corps, and two four-pound field-pieces, had marched to this part of Lower Calabria, immediately after our victory at Maida. Two

days after the battle, he captured the town and castle of Monteleone, took three hundred Frenchmen prisoners, seized all the depôt there, and, pushing on by forced marches, laid siege to Scylla; which, at the time of my arrival, had been closely blockaded for nearly twenty days.

The twilight of eve had given place to the more sombre shadow of night, when we entered the town; but no chant of vespers arose from the ruined chapels of its deserted convents: soldiers alone crowded its streets and terraces; where the shattered houses, roofless and desolate, and strewn with broken furniture, exploded shells, splinters, and cannon-shot, gave evidence of the daily work of strife.

The quarters of the general were in an old mansion, the gloomy and antique aspect of which, with its vicinity to a church, declared it to have been once the residence of an ecclesiastic of rank. The jagged archivolts, twisted columns, and grotesque decorations, all displayed the peculiar taste of the Saraceno-Norman architect, who raised the massive walls of the building; which Sir John found a very comfortable shelter from the shot of the enemy's batteries.

Leaving our horses with the quarter guard, who occupied the lower part of the building, we were ushered up a narrow wheel-staircase to a vaulted room, where we found Sir John and Colonel Oswald seated by a black oak-table, studying a

plan of Scylla; which divided their attention with an imposing jar of wine and a case of cigars.

"Welcome, Dundas," they exclaimed. "Good news, I hope? Crotona—"

"Surrendered on last Wednesday evening."

"Glorious fellow, Macleod!"

"We have taken six hundred prisoners, forty pieces of cannon, and all their stores."

"Excellent!" said the general, rubbing his hands; "and your friend—he belongs to the Free Corps, I presume?"

"Santugo's battalion. Allow me to introduce the Cavaliere di Castelermo, of the military order of Malta, who has accompanied me hither from Crotona: no easy journey, Sir John, in such a land as this. The signor is now lord of Scylla and its castle, since the defection and consequent forfeiture of his uncle, the cardinal."

The knight and general bowed.

"We must drink your health as captain," said Oswald, filling the glasses from the grey-beard, and pushing the cigars towards us; "we must also invite some of the brigade and christen your commission—eh, Dundas! Some of the cardinal's wine this—plenty more in the cellars below—(this was the house of his steward)—capital stuff, is it not?"

"And I have to congratulate the general on the rank he has obtained: long may he enjoy it!" said I, alluding to Sir John's recent elevation to the

title of Count of Maida, bestowed on him by Ferdinand of Naples.

Muttering an excuse, he tore open the covers, and hastily conned over the despatches of Macleod.

"Capitulated—honours of war—prisoners—um, um—I am afraid we shall not get possession of Scylla so easily. Here we have been for twenty days before this place—a mere tower with outworks—and are not nearer possession than we were at the first hour of our arrival; we have lost many valuable officers and men, and without having gained any advantage to compensate the service for their loss. Massena may advance to relieve the fortress, if the besieged do not soon yield; and Monteleone, the commandant, appears a most determined fellow: in answer to a flag of truce, he sent me his pledged word that he would fight to the last, and then blow up the place; but never surrender it."

"And this man," I observed, "is said to be a countryman of our own."

"You must not say that, Dundas," replied the general; "it is a mere rumour, I suppose."

"He is resolved to die game," said Oswald: "but Dundas, as you have some notion of these things, just look over this plan, will you, and say which you think the weakest point?"

"We were planning an assault," continued the general, "you may examine the features of the place to-morrow; but it is rather dangerous work

to reconnoitre within range of their long nines and twenty-four pounders. This is a plan of the fort, sent to me by Francatripa, who found it in the baggage of a French officer killed in the massacre of Sauveria: it appears to represent the place very correctly. Here is the drawbridge, there the *tête-du-pont* and fosse. You will observe, Claude, that the castle is built on the extreme verge of the cliff of Scylla, which forms the termination of a promontory washed on three sides by the sea. Our friend, the Cavaliere Marco, no doubt, knows the interior well: massive walls encompass the keep, flanked by strong towers, defended by heavy cannon and mortars."

"The curtains are well loopholed for musketry, which will sweep the ditches in every direction," said Castelermo.

"The casemates are vaulted with solid masonry," added Oswald, removing his cigar: "they are in the flanks of the bastions, and capable of containing a company each. No joke to get into a ditch, exposed to such annoyances as these, eh? They have six thirty-twos to sweep the exterior slope of the advanced fosse; in endeavouring to cross which Colonel Ross has lost some of the bravest fellows in the ranks of the 20th. The place is victualled amply, and watered by a cistern, and its garrison are resolute as their leader. So now what say you to all this? It has baffled the bravery of *my* brigade, and the skill

of M. Navarro, our Italian engineer; though he comes of a stock which has achieved great things in its day."

Here the colonel pointed to a little man, clad in the scarlet Neapolitan uniform, who had hitherto sat quietly smoking a cigar behind the shadow of a column, unseen by us.

"Yes, Signor Colonello," said he, coming forward, and placing a finger on the plan. "I am of opinion still, that there is nothing so effectual as a mine under that part of the wall nearest the town: I myself will volunteer to fire the saucisson."

"The place you speak of, is protected by a battery of thirty-two pounders," replied the general: "you are zealous and brave, Signor Navarro, and we thank you; but a party of workmen could never form chambers in a place so rocky and exposed."

"Signor Count of Maida," retorted the Italian, "I think I have served long enough to know something of mines, their capabilities and nature. My ancestor, Pietro Navarro, first introduced the noble art of springing mines, when chief engineer to the Genoese, at the siege of Serezenella in Florence; and they gained the town by means of this branch of the art military, which is as useful as it is wonderful to behold. He also took the castle of the Egg at Naples, when serving with the Spaniards; and I hold the Castel

del'Ova to be stronger than the Castello di Sciglio."

"Perhaps so: but our friend the marquis will take care that we do not undermine any part of his premises. Tell me, Claude, what is your opinion?"

Having a little smattering of engineering, I examined the plan attentively, and found that it was almost impossible to execute Navarro's project of a mine: but by using the compasses and scale, and by an observation made when approaching the place, I discovered that the fortress was completely commanded by a neighbouring hill; by carrying guns to the scarp of which, the outer and inner defences would be easily battered, and a breach effected. It gave me no great opinion of Navarro's skill, that he had not discovered this very simple and obvious method before.

The general gave an exclamation of delight when I proposed and explained my mode of attack; but the eyes of the little Italian, of course, gleamed with malice and anger: which, for the present, he chose to conceal, although he pulled fiercely at his cigar, and kicked with his heels against the column behind him.

"Now, then, Sir John, what ordnance have you?"

"Two curricle guns, four pounders only: they are of little use; but Sir Sidney Smith has lent us eight thirty-sixes from his frigate, for the

especial behoof of the marquis and his garrison. To drag them to the scarp of the hill is no easy task: but it shall be done, and this night too! Scylla must be ours, at all risks. Its position at the gorge of the Strait renders it of the greatest importance as a defence against shipping."

"A little Gibraltar," said Castelermo.

"And ours it shall be, if it costs us as much trouble as ever old Gib. did," replied Stuart. "Hallo, Pierce!"

His orderly appeared.

"Give my compliments to Gascoigne, the brigade-major; tell him to get three officers and one hundred and fifty privates from each regiment, to drag the frigate's guns to the top of the hill yonder, where they must be in a position to open at daybreak; and desire him — or stay —I had better give you a note, perhaps."

He scribbled one hastily on the back of a guard-report, or some such valuable document; and Pierce, who had stood erect as a ramrod, raised his hand to his forehead, wheeled sharply round as if upon a pivot, and withdrew. Immediately afterwards a bugle sounded, and in the course of ten minutes the parties went off at a rapid pace with pickaxes, crow-bars, shovels, and ropes; the former to clear the way, and the latter to drag the cannon up the rocky, rough, and steep hill-side.

"Finish the contents of the jar, gentlemen,"

said Sir John, filling Castelermo's glass, and passing the ample graybeard; "mend the fire, somebody."

Oswald gave the smoky fire-pan a kick, causing its contents to blaze up and diffuse a very little heat, and a great deal of smoke through the apartment; which, like most in Italy, being without fire-place or chimney, was warmed by a panful of burning olive-husks, impregnating the atmosphere with a disagreeable odour.

"O, for the coal fires of old England!" said the general.

"Or the snug parlour of Dunnikeir!" chimed in Oswald; thinking, doubtless, of his comfortable mansion in the east neuk of Fife.

After half an hour's conversation, maintained principally by myself, in describing the journey from Crotona, we adjourned to the scene of operations; where four hundred and fifty soldiers were toiling along a narrow and rugged road, dragging the heavy guns from the beach towards the mountain.

"Beware of that little fellow Navarro!" said Castelermo, tapping me on the shoulder; "he regards you with no friendly eye, for the *exposé* you made of his ignorance. He is Sicilian bred, and the Sicilians are slippery dogs."

A party provided with hatchets, pickaxes, and spades, moved in front, and cleared the way by cutting down trees and hedges, levelling walls

and fences, and removing all obstacles to the progress of those who brought the cannon; some pulling the ropes attached to the clumsy ship-carriages, whilst others urged the little creaking wheels by applying crow-bars behind. It was a task equally slow and laborious; but the officers, with proper zeal, set an example to the soldiers, by sharing in the toil, and working among them without their coats. On the hill all traces of road or track had disappeared, and thickets of olives, wild vines, ruined walls, masses of sandstone, ruts, and gorges, obstructed the way so much, that the hour of two in the morning arrived ere the guns were posted and ready for service.

Our little party of artillery, assisted by some of the infantry of the line, had them loaded, depressed, and prepared to open fire, the instant day began to brighten the Straits of Messina.

Meanwhile, the marquis and his garrison were not idle: by the noise in the town below, they became aware that something unusual was going on; and blue balls were burned on every battlement and pinnacle, until all Scylla seemed wrapped in livid flames: a ghastly glare lighted up the ocean to the west, and the mountains to the east; the clouds above us floated in sulphury blue; and even the spires of Fiumara and Messina glimmered in the cold, unearthly lustre shed from those lofty ramparts. The castle was so distinctly revealed, that we could have counted every stone in the massive

keep, and every bar in the grated windows; but the night was so dark as effectually to conceal our operations. They fired a few rounds of shot and shell at random, killing a few of the guards who blocked up the avenues of the place, but otherwise without effect; and I have no doubt they were a little disconcerted, when dawning day revealed to them eight thirty-sixes on the mountain-side, and opposed to the weakest part of their works. A commotion was immediately observable among them; and a still greater one when, on firing our first salvo, a mass of the outer bastion, above the cordon, fell into the ditch below.

Encouraged by this, our artillerymen plied the cannon with might and main, working in their shirt-sleeves (it was a broiling morning); but after an hour's firing, the carronades became heated, and began to "kick" and recoil so much, that they were compelled to cease operations for a time, and permit them to cool: a process which the French usually facilitate by introducing sponges steeped in vinegar, when it can be had; which is not often, on service.

The gallant garrison strove hard to interrupt these successful operations; but as we were rather beyond the range of musketry, and their battery-guns could not be pointed to such an elevation as that on which we were situated, they had recourse to mortars: these, however, were so ill-managed that

the bombs generally fell short, and either sank into the turf or rolled down the hill to the sea-shore and exploded among the breakers.

When again our battery opened, we heard the French band playing the old republican *carmagnole*—a piece of mere gasconade.

"I will bet a dozen of wine we change their tune in an hour," said the general, who was watching the operations through his telescope. "We will humble them yet."

"Ha! what can that be?" I exclaimed; "a sortie?"

"No; but the devil seems to have jumped over the castle-wall into the town below," said Oswald. An unusual bustle took place amongst our soldiers, who were seen running through the streets in confusion, and exposed to the enemy's musketry, which instantly opened on them.

An enormous carcass, 230-pounds weight, had been blown from a mortar into Scylla; with the intention of setting it on fire. The combustibles which compose this amiable engine of modern warfare, are pitch, tallow, powder, saltpetre, oil, broken barrels of muskets, loaded grenades, bars of iron, chains, and broken bottles, all hooped together in one globular mass; through these, fuse-holes are bored, and to which lighted matches are applied the moment before the bomb is shot forth.

This ponderous affair descended through the roof of the general's temporary quarter; where,

luckily, there was no wood-work to burn: but the house was shattered to its foundations, unroofed, and blown to ruins in a moment.

"Basta!" exclaimed Cavaliere Marco, as the carcass exploded, without doing further harm; "a rare fellow is this marchese! He will fight to the death-gasp, I warrant; and Scylla will never fall while his hand can hold a sabre."

"Then we will leave the castle in a worse predicament than the earthquake left it," replied Sir John, closing his telescope sharply.

"You may blow it into the sea, for aught that I care, gentlemen," said the Italian; "its late lord, my uncle, was ever a niggard of his ducats to me, and I have no great love for his old house. Many an unhappy heretic and infidel has perished in the obscurity of its dungeons. I know something of them. Will you believe it, Signor Claude? the old bashaw once lodged me in them for a week, because I interfered with his friendship for a certain fair damsel of Reggio: cardinals are not to be trifled with!"

"Well, sir," said the general, "you may join the assault to-night, if the breach is practicable." The eyes of the brave cavalier sparkled.

"With heart and hand, excellency! I bear as much hatred to our foes in Scylla, as a Christian man may bear to others. They are the false, tyrannical, and oppressive French! I have not forgotten that when Napoleon's fleet appeared off

Malta, the knights of Provence, Auvergne, and all the French langue, abandoned the banner of the order, instead of fighting like L'Isle Adam of old, as long as stone wall and steel blade remained true to them."

The general bowed, and smiled slightly at the Italian's enthusiasm.

"Thank Heaven, the carcass did no more damage," said he: "the effect of one, properly shot, is indeed tremendous. I saw one fired when Moore took the Mozzello fort. Ah! Dundas, it was your poor brother, Frank, and I who led on the stormers there: he was a brave and dashing fellow, and would have been a glory to his profession but for that dog of a German—Kranz."

Before sunset a tolerable breach was effected in that part of the bastions next the town; and by way of filling up the interval of time till dusk, our battery played on the keep with such success that a great part of the wall repaired by the French fell down, and thus weakened the fort considerably. But the marchese kept his soldiers steadily at work the whole day, although exposed to our fire; and, with billets and facines, endeavoured, in the usual manner, to repair the breaches: they, however, were reported fully practicable by the officer in charge of the battery, and at eleven o'clock that night an assault was ordered to take place.

CHAPTER XI.

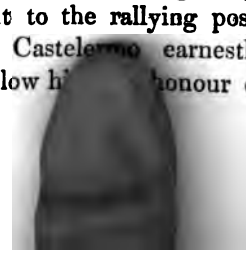
THE FORLORN-HOPE.

At sunset the following notice was circulated:—

"*Brigade Orders.*—Officers desirous of leading the forlorn-hope are requested to send in their names, without delay, to Brigade-Major Gascoigne."

After turning over this invitation in my mind for some time, and weighing the chances of promotion against those of escape, I resolved not to send in my card to Gascoigne; notwithstanding that longing for fame and distinction—a secret craving to be the first man among the multitude, which, in fact, is the true sentiment that makes us buckle on the sword at first: but to lead a forlorn-hope is to throw away one's life.

Just when the troops were getting silently under arms in a sheltered place, near an old, gloomy, and empty convent, I went to the rallying post. The spirited Cavaliere di Castelermo earnestly requested the general to allow h[illegible] honour of



heading the dangerous enterprise; but his services, his high courage and birth, and his commander's cross, availed him nothing in the present instance. Sir John politely thanked him; and hinted, as delicately as he could, that a British officer alone could lead where British soldiers were to follow.

"Signor Count," replied the Italian bitterly, "there was a time when the cross of St. John was valued more highly—when its wearers *followed* none; but alone led the way. It has pleased Fate to try us sorely, like the Templars of other days: we have been deprived of our ships, our castles, and our possessions, of all but our name and glory; yet I trust there is a time to come when once more the banner of Malta will be what it was—what it has been ever since the accursed Mussulmans captured Rhodez: the shield of the Christian mariner, and the terror of the African barbarian!"

The restoration of his order to all its chivalric glory and military power, was one of Castelermo's darling themes; and one about which he bored me for many a long hour. Poor Marco! he was doomed never to behold the realization of those gay visions of his bold and heroic fancy.

"Yet, signor," he continued, "if I cannot lead in the assault, I will endeavour to be the second man within the breach."

"Young Morley, of the 20th, has sent in his name," said Gascoigne; who at that moment approached, with a number of notes in his hand.

"The little fool!" muttered the general; "poor boy—he has seen little enough of life yet to be in such a hurry to quit it. Does he lead the stormers?"

"No—Dundas, of ours," replied Gascoigne, who was a 62nd man. "So you mean to lead 'the lost children' to-night," he added to me.

"No, faith! a company is not got every day, and——"

"Your name is on my list as a volunteer, though!"

"The deuce it is!" I exclaimed, gravely; "I never sent it to you."

"Amazing!" said he, handing me a note, written in a hand and signed with a signature so like my own—having every blot, turn, and dash—that I was confounded and nonplussed.

"I never penned this note, gentlemen! Never! I pledge my honour: it is a forgery, to lead me into unnecessary danger,"

"Singular!" said the brigade-major, puzzled.

"'T is the roguery of Navarro," whispered Marco: "I will wager a hundred crowns to a carlino, this is a piece of his revenge."

"Dundas, there is no time for inquiry or exposure just now," said Colonel Oswald. "What do you propose—to withdraw your name?"

"No, I will lead the assault; and to-morrow, if I survive, shall expose this cowardly Sicilian forger, who is a disgrace to the uniform he

wears;" said I, exasperated to find myself compelled, in honour, to undertake this most perilous and deadly duty, where the chances of escape with life were as one to a hundred, without the glorious credit of being a willing volunteer.

"Fall in—the stormers," cried Gascoigne.

"Gentlemen—to your posts," cried Sir John; and I was left almost alone. The time of attack was so close at hand, that luckily I had little time for reflection: yet, for a few minutes, I became grave and melancholy enough. Life, death, home, Bianca, wounds and agony, all floated in confusion before me: but these misgivings were stifled, and a chivalric recklessness—a desperate hope—a glow of courage that would make one face the devil, took possession of my breast, when the stormers, two hundred in number, selected from volunteers of the 20th, threw off their knapsacks, blankets, and canteens, and were handed over to me by their adjutant. For my heavy cocked-hat, with its long staff plumes, I substituted a light foraging cap; for my tasselled hessians, a pair of large jack-boots. I buckled my waist-belt tighter, examined the blade and hilt of my sword, threw away my cigar, and gave the word—

"Attention! Mr. Morley you will inspect the rear-rank."

The pouches were opened, the flints and ammunition examined by the light of the diamond-like stars; the orders to fix bayonets, and load with

ball-cartridge, followed. The ramrods went home on the charges with a sullen, muffled sound; the muskets rattled, and then the ranks became motionless and still. The bell of some distant campanile tolled the eleventh hour, and as the sound floated away, I could hear my own heart beating, through all its thickening pulses.

My subaltern, poor lad, looked very pale: I could perceive it by the starlight.

"Morley!" I whispered, in a tart tone of surprise.

"I am thinking of my mother—she is far away, at home;" he faltered, and colouring deeply, added, "I cannot help these thoughts."

"Few of us will hear twelve strike," thought I, whilst closing the ranks, and lowering the point of my sabre to the general, to intimate that we were ready.

"Success to you, Dundas," said he. "Move on by sections: you know the breach—at the top, the main street. The fellows begin to scent our purpose already. You will be ably supported: Oswald, with the 58th; Ross, with the 20th; de Watteville's corps is the reserve. Forward!"

We moved off, and at the same moment the French guns again opened on the town, worked with renewed energy and rapidity. The rock of Scylla was shaken to its sea-worn foundations; and the lights, flashing from battlement and embrasure, revealed the parapets lined with stern faces and

bristling bayonets, the lofty keep crowded with men, and its giant outline towering over the whirling smoke which issued from the guns of the lower works.

The windings of the shore, the peak of Monte Jaci, and the caverns below us, rang with continual discharges of the artillery; and the intervals were filled by the roar of the seething surf, and its booming in the yawning depths of Dragara, where

"Scylla bellows from her dire abodes!
Tremendous pest! abhorred by men and gods!
Hideous her voice, and with less terror roar
The whelps of lions in the midnight hour."
Odyssey, Book xii.

The night was close and still; the frequent flashes of the fire-arms reddened the gathered clouds, and lightened the bosom of the ocean: the scene was grand and impressive. But we had very little poetry in our hearts as we stumbled up the rough dark street, over which the thirty-twos and long nines whistled incessantly; one moment dealing death and mutilation amongst us, and the next bringing some ruined gable or ponderous balcony thundering down on our perilous line of march. With the utmost speed we pressed forward, while Oswald followed with his corps, and without much loss we passed the houses, and debouched upon the ridge, when the whole outline of the

fortress burst at once upon our view. We rushed forward to the breach under a tremendous fire, which rained from every parapet, point, and loop-hole. Magnificent and terrible was the aspect of the castle at that moment: once more, innumerable blue lights shed their livid and sepulchral glare on town and fortress, land and sea; enabling the defenders to direct their fire steadily upon us. The musketry rolled in one voluminous blaze over breastwork and palisade, while the batteries played with incessant rapidity, loading the air with the sound of thunder; for the echoes, thrown back by the hills, were redoubled by the resounding caverns of the rock. From the summit of the keep to the lower walls, every point seemed to swarm with men; and was either blazing with light or shadowed by smoke, and bristling with lines of flashing steel.

Before us lay the breach, foredoomed to be the deathbed of many; it was an immense mass of loose stones, and the ascent to it was most troublesome, with such obstacles as we had to contend with. Fascines and chevaux-de-frise were thrown across the gap; and in rear of this crowded the garrison, who were firing on us with deadly coolness and precision.

Morley fell dead at my feet! An indescribable sensation—a kind of frenzy possessed me. I shouted and rushed up, brandishing my sabre and holding aloft in my left hand the little standard, which I had undertaken to place on

the walls of Scylla or die in the attempt: it was blown to ribbons by the storm of balls. Navarro was forgotten: I thought only of glory and Bianca!

"Forward, 20th! Remember Egmont! On, on! Hurrah!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried the wild stormers, as they scrambled up the breach in a mob, encumbered by the killed and wounded, who were falling every second under their feet. A shower of hand-grenades, thrown by the grenadiers of the 20th, who were posted in rear of a low wall close by, drove the enemy back from the chevaux-de-frise, and shattered it to pieces. These military engines, which are now most unaccountably laid aside, were followed by a few round shot from our battery: their discharge created great confusion among the French; so much so that we reached the summit of the breach without suffering half the slaughter I had anticipated.

A new engine was now brought into operation, the effect of which will never be forgotten by me, while life and memory remain.

"Push on, for God's sake! O, my brave fellows! trust now to the bayonet, and the bayonet only!" I cried.

"Viva Ferdinando nostro e la Santa Fede!" shouted Castelermo, springing to my side; but the Calabrian war-cry was almost lost in the cheers of the 20th, and the terrific din around

us: the ear was stunned with one continual roar of frightful sounds. But the groan, the stifled gasp, the agonizing cry were unheard or unheeded: we made the corpses of our dearest comrades stepping-stones, and through the shot and shell-splinters, which swept around us like a hail-storm, we rushed on, to close, to grapple with, and overwhelm the enemy. At their head we perceived the marquis, a noble-looking fellow, on whose broad breast the stars and medals of his achievements were shining in the light from the muskets and bursting bombs.

At that instant I reached the summit of the breach, and laid my hand on the chevaux-de-frise to vault over, when the earth heaved and yawned beneath our feet; a tremendous explosion and a dreadful crash ensued: a hundred of my party were blown to atoms in a moment, and I was thrown over the barrier, falling headlong in the midst of the enemy.

Unseen by us, after dusk, a caisson des bombes, or tub filled with loaded shells, had been secretly sunk under the stones of the breach, and being slightly covered over by fragments of masonry, lay concealed until the moment we trod upon it; when the French fired it by means of a saucisson, and produced a frightful catastrophe. There was a pause for a moment; but a moment only.

The few survivors of the storming party re-

coiled, and I saw Castelermo clinging with all the desperation of a dying man to a cope-stone of the shattered battlement. The stone yielded and gave way; there was a cry of "Basta!" and the poor knight vanished; but whether into the fosse or the sea beneath the cliffs, I knew not: in either case, I was sure he must have perished.

A yell of triumph burst from the French; it was echoed by one of defiance from our stormers, who once more rushed forward, led on by Colonel Oswald. His tall and stately figure afforded a prominent mark for the fire of the besieged; but he miraculously escaped. With all the courage that desperation could inspire, I used my sabre among the French, with a strength and energy they were unaccustomed to; but my efforts to clear the barrier and rejoin our stormers were perfectly ineffectual. At the very moment that Oswald sprang, sword in hand, over the now shattered blades of the chevaux-de-frise, followed by the 20th, thirsting for vengeance, I received a blow from the butt of a musket, and felt as if crushed beneath the weight of a mountain; the light of a thousand stars seemed to dance before me; then all was dark, horribly dark! My God! I faltered, and sank to the earth: the French, supposing me dead, trod over me as they rushed forward to the conflict.

The fatal breach was now passed, and our soldiers fought like lions to retain their ground within it.

The conflict was maintained, hand to hand, with resolute valour: swords and ponderous musket-butts were whirling about like sticks at Donnybrook fair.

My head swam with the effects of the blow; yet I contrived to crawl from among the legs of the French—whose red breeches and leather leggings I shall not soon forget—and drew near Oswald. Then starting up, half blinded with blood, smoke, and confusion, I rushed upon the French commandant. I had not exchanged half a dozen passes with him, ere a heavy dizziness came over me: I staggered backwards, and, sinking, clung to a cannon for support. He had raised his sabre aloft to cleave my head in two; but, like a gallant soldier as he was, he spared me, and engaged Oswald, in whom he found no common adversary; for the colonel was stout of heart and strong of hand as any kail-supper that ever came out of the famous "kingdom" of Fife.

Short but desperate was the combat that ensued: a stroke across the temple laid the famous marchese, whose name was so terrible to the Neapolitans, prostrate before his conqueror; and he was trodden to the earth among the gory corpses which cumbered the breach; while the whole 58th, with their black standards in front, swept over us.

CHAPTER XII.

A RENCONTRE!

As all our impetuous troops had now passed through the breach, the French were driven beyond it; but the conflict raged with undiminished fury in other parts of the fortress. The place where I had fallen, benumbed and bruised, was comparatively quiet and still; and whilst I lay there, I heard a voice close by me exclaim, in pure English, "O, my God! and here end all my hopes, my joys, and sorrows! My mother—my home—I shall never see them more! Alas! the one would weep for, the other scorn me! Aloise—dearest Aloise! we meet no more! Well, I have ever been faithful to you, and to our emperor. You have ever been loving, and my sovereign grateful."

Turning with surprise, I found it was the French commandant who was thus soliloquizing; whilst he bled profusely from a wound, which disfigured him very much.

"Here is a stout Briton who has been fighting under the tricolor, or some wild spirit that has fled from Ireland after the last rising," I thought, whilst approaching him on my hands and knees. I tied up his head with my handkerchief to stanch the blood — though I myself needed the same attention—and on dividing the contents of my pocket-flask between us, the commandant recovered wonderfully.

"Sir, you have betrayed yourself to be British!" said I, in a low stern voice. "With me your secret is safe: I respect you as a brave man, and should have done so still more had you been a Frenchman; but beware how you become known to Sir John Stuart: he is a stern soldier of the old school, who will assuredly order a drum-head court-martial, and have you shot as a traitor!"

The eyes of the marquis flashed fire.

"I am now a soldier of fortune," he replied, "free to serve where and whom I please. Stuart, if he knew all—if he remembered. But there is a secret spirit whispering at this moment within me, that I have met you before: you are the officer who led the forlorn hope?" His voice faltered.

"Yes."

"And whom I encountered in the breach, before that tall officer cut me down?"

"The same."

"O, fate! if it should be so," he exclaimed, passing his hand across his blood-stained brow;

and then grasping me with energy, "your name, sir?"

"Dundas," said I; "Claude Dundas."

"Of the 62nd Foot?" His eyes were now starting in his head, so intensely he gazed on me.

"Yes, sir," I replied sharply; "*I* am not ashamed to acknowledge myself."

"Taunt me not—taunt me not!" he exclaimed, wildly; "God! I am your brother—I am Frank, who was dismissed from the Corsicans so unjustly. This hour—this agony—my wound—O say, in ten years have you quite forgotten my features?"

For a moment I regarded, with wonder, his bronzed and bearded visage, now covered with blood; then, appalled by his words, I endeavoured to trace in his features those of the fair-haired and light-hearted boy who used to carry me on his back to school, and was my champion and protector in many a fisticuff battle and bicker: who was so often flogged by the grim old janitor for taking my faults and blunders on himself, and for whom I wept like a girl through many a long weary night, when, as a stripling ensign, he joined the army under the good Duke of York, and first fired my boyish ardour by being gazetted for his valour at Valenciennes.

For a time, memory carried me back to the pleasant days of our childhood, and my heart, which a moment before had been strung for stirring deeds of carnage and death, relaxed and melted

within me: in that terrible hour, in the gory breach of Scylla, surrounded by the dying and dead, with the uproar of the assault yet sounding above and around me, I threw away my sabre, and weeping, as I had done in my boyish days, embraced that brother over whom all believed the grave had closed, and whom I had never expected to meet again on earth.

"Happy as I am to meet you, Frank, I would rather that we had never met, than that I should meet you thus. The French uniform ——"

"Is that of as brave an army as the sun shines on!" he replied, enthusiastically. "Insulted pride, necessity, and revenge, forced me into its ranks, where I have served faithfully and honourably; as the high civil and military rank I have attained, together with these badges, received some of them from Napoleon's hand on the Champ de Mars, and some on the battle-fields of Holland and Italy, can amply testify. Our mother," he added, in a broken voice, "tell me, our mother ——"

"Lives still; but old and sorrowing."

"And Kranz—my evil genius?"

"Dead—shot at St. Eufemio."

"There ends our enmity," he replied, through his set teeth. "I have gained a rank infinitely above that from which he degraded me. Heaven knows how my heart bled when first I found myself opposed to the ranks of your army at Maida: the well-known colours and red-coats—ay, even

my own old regiment, the gallant Rangers; whose officers and men, all save one, had been my comrades through many a perilous day. O, it was an hour of acute and indescribable agony when I saw them marching by the Amato in close column, with their band in front, playing the same merry quickstep to which I had often marched in happier days. I have found the French as honourable as they are brave, and could I have forgotten home, should have been supremely happy in their service. My marriage with Aloise Milette, daughter of the general of division—you must have heard of him—would have given me additional ties to France. Aloise—ah! if you knew her, Claude;" he paused, as if to collect his scattered thoughts, and then, although his senses were wandering, continued:—

"This last stronghold of the emperor in the Calabrias, I have defended to the last—yes, with all my power and courage; and in this moment of extremity I must not desert my brave fellows, while a chance remains of driving Oswald's brigade through the breach or into the sea. Farewell! God bless you, Claude! Speak kindly of me to those at home—to my poor mother—she will never see me more."

He strained me for a moment to his breast, and snatching up his notched sabre, staggered towards that part of the works where an unequal contest was maintained by a section of Frenchmen; whom our soldiers were endeavouring in vain to dislodge

from a bomb-proof vault, by firing *in* through the same loop-holes from which the enemy dealt death so securely.

"Vive l'Empereur!" he exclaimed, rushing towards them with his brandished sabre.

"Frank!" I cried; "Frank, by the memory of all that has passed!—for the love of God—hear me!" But he heard me not. He had scarcely advanced a dozen paces, when a shot—whether aimed or fired at random, I know not—passed through his head and flattened on a gun-breech beside me. He fell dead across a heap of his own men, and never moved again. A cry of horror rose to my lips; but expired upon them unuttered. Stupified with the events of the night, my brain whirled, and I sank down on the slippery and bloody pavement of the inner bastion: my mind was a fearful chaos, and I experienced a sensation like that of a horrible nightmare.

Weak as a child, and quite unmanned, bitter tears rolled over my cheeks. A dead man lay across me: I was half-stifled, but could not move. I thought of home; and the splashing of the waves far below me sounded like the murmur of my native Esk: again I heard, in imagination, the ripple of its waters tinkling in Roslin's lonely glen; the woods of Dalkeith rustled over me. Frank's last words yet rang in my ears: but it seemed the familiar voice of a boy; then came that of my mother, low and sad—she was weeping for her son.

Again I was a child, and her kiss was on my cheek. Salt and hot were the tears I shed, and bitter the agony I endured, ere blessed unconsciousness possessed me, and sinking back against the gun-slide, I swooned among the bodies of the dead.

* * * * *

Long ere this, the place had been taken. Infuriated by the protracted assault, our men burst over the fortress like a torrent. De Watteville's soldiers were like madmen. Woe to the officer who dared to check their plundering, or curb their fury!—and woe to the unhappy women who fell into their power! Innumerable episodes of horror followed the conclusion of the storm. The French, who had been disarmed, were marched instantly to the beach, and embarked on board Sir Sidney's squadron; which had come close in shore on hearing the noise of the attack.

No time was to be lost in making Scylla again defensible; therefore, before daybreak, the dead were all interred in a common grave, in a hollow near Monte Jaci. For one amongst the hundreds thus buried, I desired a separate and more secluded sepulchre; but, stripped of his epaulettes and orders, *his* body, without being recognised, had been hurried away, and entombed with the common herd in that dreadful grave, over which two hundred soldiers hurled the earth for concealment of the ghastly heaps within it. I remember

the place: an orange tree, of gigantic size, shadowed it; and a ruined Grecian column may yet point it out to the tourist: it was lying near, and our soldiers placed it over the grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

REGGIO.—AN IMPROVISATORE.

WHILST I was still lying where I had sunk down exhausted—stunned by my wound, appalled by the recent discovery, weak with pain and loss of blood, and utterly prostrated in spirit—the fortress became still, or comparatively so, and the objects all around were veiled in darkness: the blue lights had burned out, and the lurid gleam of the cannon and musketry no longer flashed through the gloom. Cries and piteous exclamations of agony resounded from every quarter; and the living were dragged from beneath heaps of dead, to be sent to the hospital—an old, half-ruined convent, which was appropriated to receive the wounded; but which was soon found to be inadequate to contain them.

Three soldiers employed in searching for those who needed relief approached me; one of them bore a lantern, and its light glared on the once gay, but now tattered, uniform of Castelermo, who

accompanied them, and whose fate I had altogether forgotten.

"Basta! and here he is!" he exclaimed; "only stunned, I hope.—How now, Signor Capitano?—nothing more than a few inches of the skin ripped up?"

"A cloven head, only," I replied, in a faint voice.

"Only!" he reiterated.

"An old wound broken out again. I was struck by a musket-butt on the very place where a ball grazed my head at Cefalu. But I am glad to see you alive and scatheless, after that sad tumble you had when blown out of the breach."

"I have indeed had an escape which, to my dying day, will never be forgotten. I fell only into the fosse: but a yard more, on one side, would have launched me into the deep; and, by this time, I should have been—Madonna knows where, in the depths of 'devouring Scylla.' Never shall I forget the storming of this castle, though I should live as long as father Adam."

The soldiers raised me up, and, on receiving the assistance of Castelermo's arm, I was able to walk, and was led into the interior of the castle; where, after guards had been posted, one party of the conquerors was making merry on the wine, brandy, and viands found in the French stores. Another party was already bearing away the dead for interment: they were so numerous that the

general deemed it prudent, in so hot a climate, to have the poor fellows all under the turf by sunrise. The taking of the place had been attended with considerable slaughter: but I have forgotten the exact casualties.

For several days after the assault, our troops were occupied in repairing the old defences, building new ones, remounting cannon, burying the stray corpses, which were sometimes found in retired nooks and corners, and in attending to the wounded; whilst I remained inactive on the list of the convalescents. To me, these were days of indescribable misery and *ennui:* I endured agony, both of mind and body; for a wound on the head, dangerous at all times, is doubly so in a warm climate. I became feverish and restless, and was haunted by gloomy visions and fancies.

The assault—its dangers, uproar, and excitement—that unexpected and terrible rencontre—the voice—the face—the words—the figure, which seemed to come to me from the grave, to appear only and be lost for ever—all flitted continually before me, like some hideous dream. I brooded over the secret, which I dared not reveal even to my most intimate friends in the garrison; and it oppressed and weighed upon me like some vast incubus. I was restless, unhappy, and careless of all that was passing around me; or, if I spent a thought on the external world, it was always

accompanied by a wish to be again engaged on some piece of active service.

Oswald being the officer who fairly led the stormers through the breach, I did not receive promotion; but, in lieu, a ribbon with a silver clasp, having the word *Scylla* inscribed on it, was presented to me. This I considered no ordinary compliment; rewards for merit being—strange to say—almost unknown in the British service: if we except those rings worn on the arms of the privates, and called "good conduct stripes," in contradistinction to the *bad*, which are bestowed elsewhere.

My name was duly emblazoned in the general orders, and transmitted to the Horse Guards, whence the reiterated compliments of the commander-in-chief were published through all the journals of the day; and while, in my obscure billet at Scylla, I knew nothing about it, I was becoming quite a man of note at home.

As soon as the fall of the fortress became known, the inhabitants of the town, whom the din of war had driven to Reggio and Messina, came flocking back to their ruined and rifled habitations; and the picturesque little place soon resumed its wonted appearance of life and activity, which the presence of Oswald's brigade, and the vicinity of our fleet, not a little increased.

I had a tolerably comfortable billet with an

ancient lady, who did all in her power to make me happy; for she perceived that something weighed heavily on my spirits, and that I was gloomy and melancholy. She was a garrulous old gossip, whose head was then as full of saints and miracles as it had been of love and lovers thirty years before, and a famous maker of polenta and choke-priest: with which she often nearly choked me; but old Signoressa Pia was so kind and motherly in her manner, that I have ever since remembered her with gratitude.

The little town and its castle were crowded to excess; the latter with Oswald's brigade, and the former with its returned inhabitants, our own wounded, and those of the enemy. There was not a closet, garret, or cellar unoccupied; and Castelermo shared with me the hospitality of Signora Pia. Our quarters could not be called billets, as each person housed himself where he could; the seniors generally occupying the best, by right of rank.

From the windows of my apartment, we had a noble view of the Straits, studded with vessels, and gleaming in blue and saffron by day, and in silver and green by night; the white-terraced houses and spires of Messina, the beautiful mountains, and all the Sicilian shore. In the evening, I often enjoyed the cool prospect and a fragrant cigar, while sipping the scanty half-pint of ration wine, to which the medical officer restricted me,

and listening to the dashing of the waves on the cliffs below. The little library of the signora was placed at my disposal; but the "Gierusalemme," the "Hundred Ancient Tales," the poems of Alfieri, and the sayings and doings of many holy personages, were all turned over listlessly; until, at last, I found one volume which interested me deeply. It was one of which I had heard Bianca speak most rapturously, and which all Italians mention with admiration—the Poems of Ossian, the Bard of Selma, which are so ably translated by the celebrated poet Cesarotti; whose pen has added an essay on their authenticity and beauty, which the Italians can appreciate, even through the medium of a second translation. From Napoleon—who is said never to have been without a copy of this work, especially when writing bulletins and general orders—the Abate Cesarotti received a handsome pension. The book afforded me occupation during the few weeks I remained at Scylla. I say weeks, because Ossian is not a work to be skimmed, but rather studied; every line is so replete with power and beauty. But my quiet mode of life was not fated to last long, as I was sent on duty the moment my name was off the staff-surgeon's list.

As soon as I could ride, I ordered out Cartouche, and, accompanied by Castelermo, rode over to Reggio, in faint hope of beholding that famous phenomenon, the Fata Morgana—the sea fairy, as

our padrona called her—who, according to the Calabrese tradition, is a mermaid dwelling in the Straits of Messina, above the waves of which she displays her palaces of shell and coral, to lure young men to destruction: but there are fairies in all the cities of Italy, whose lures are more dangerous than those of the poor mermaid in the fable.

Castelermo informed me that he had been hearing mass at a chapel of San Bartolemmeo, among the hills, where he had solemnly returned thanks to the great patron of his order, for his narrow escape at Scylla.

"And San Bartolemmeo, who was he?" I asked.

"A most blessed saint, signor. To-day is the anniversary of his martyrdom: he was flayed alive by order of Astiages, the Armenian. But my escape—maladetto! 't was a narrow one: when my hold relaxed and I fell from the broken battlement, I thought myself gone for ever. Yes, signor, but for St. John of Malta, and the beatified Madonna, I must have been dashed to pieces on those stone-flags, which received me so softly: in all my campaigns under the cardinal, in all my fighting under the winged-horse at Rome, and the Maltese flag, I never encountered an adventure equal to it!"

"Under the Maltese flag? Against the Turks, I presume?"

"Basta! ay, and Corsairs of Barbary, pirates of Greece, and, lastly, Frenchmen. You are aware that three months after the soldiers of Napoleon cap-

tured that solitary rock, where the banner of the true faith had waved so long, the hereditary vassals of the order, irritated by the tyranny of his general, Vaubois, rose in arms: with a few knights of the old Italian langue, I hastened to put myself at their head, and assist in the expulsion of those irreligious invaders. Ha! then we had something like war. The gates of Valetta, and the other cities of the isle, were shut, and their blockaded garrison reduced to the utmost famine and distress. Then ensued that long and bloody seige which lasted for two years; during which time more than twenty thousand soldiers perished by the sword or starvation. As the great master spirit of those military operations, I was in my glory; and was full of fervour, rapture, and extasy at the prospect of once more establishing my order. No pilgrim, on first beholding the holy city from afar, ever experienced the glow of indescribable feeling which possessed me, when the fleet of Portugal, sent by Lord Nelson to our assistance, burst joyously on my gaze; as the gallant ships, with their frowning tiers of artillery, their standards streaming, and white canvass swelling in the breeze, steered round the promontory, and opened their broadsides against the castle of St. Elmo. O, hour of joy! I kissed my sword, and raised my hands to the blue sky above me, in thankfulness. Lastly came the fleets of Britain and Sicily; after which the fortresses surrendered, and the soldiers of Vaubois, marching to the sea-shore,

threw down their arms. All the treasured hopes, the glowing thoughts of years, were about to be accomplished: I stepped forward to receive the sword of the general; judge of my wrath, when Lord Nelson anticipated me; bowing low, Vaubois presented his sword by the hilt, and the admiral immediately handed it to a short squat fellow, a sailor, who stood behind; and who, with the most provoking indifference and sang froid, put it under his arm with those of other officers, as he received them in succession."

Castelermo heaved a deep sigh, paused, and then continued:—

"I had in my hands the same consecrated standard which Ximenes, our most illustrious grand-master, had, in better days, unfurled against the infidels of Algeria; I was about to hoist it on the ramparts of Valetta, and at the point of the sword claim the Isle in the name of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem, when, lo! the British flag was hoisted on the turrets of St. Elmo: a cold shivering seized my frame, while my heart glowed with honest indignation at the grasping nature of England. Slowly the flag ascended, unrolling its gaudy crosses to the breeze, when the cheers of the troops, mingling with those of our fickle and perfidious vassals, were echoed back by the shipping of the allies in our harbour, and the Sicilians thundered a salute from the bastions of Ricasoli. I thought of old Villiers de l'Isle Adam, of Diomedes, of John

de Valette, and the glories that had passed away for ever. Sick at heart, and disgusted with the world, I tossed into the sea beneath me the banner of Ximenes, and sheathing my sword, quitted for ever the Isle of Malta: where for two long years I had fought, toiled, and bled; animated by the proud and chivalric hope, that by restoring to its pristine grandeur the order of St. John, I should live in story, like those brave warriors who shine in the glowing pages of Vertot. But, alas! we are falling now, as the Templars fell of old."

I never interrupted him: the departed glories of his order formed a sad but favourite theme, and he continued to dwell upon it until we arrived at Reggio. The white houses of the town, the undulating hills, palm-groves, and orangeries, formed a very agreeable landscape, sloping down to the glassy bosom of the dark blue ocean.

"And this is Rhegium, so celebrated in the history of the past."

"Where guilty Circé trod the waves with feet unwetted, and where the wild warriors of Barbarossa gave all to fire and sword," said the cavaliere, as we rode over ground strewed with ruins, now rapidly becoming hidden under luxuriant masses of ivy and vine. "These shattered walls bear traces of the great earthquake of 1783; which will never be forgotten until some still greater calamity overwhelms all Calabria with destruction and horror."

"The Grecian columns yonder——"

"Are the relics of an earlier age: fragments of the great temple of Minerva. Reggio was once famous for its country villas; of those you behold only the ruins, which are used as a common quarry by the people; and here you will look in vain for the city, once so famed for its extent and opulence: but the sacking and burning of 1544, the convulsion of 1783, and succeeding wars and woes, have reduced it to what you now see."

Though some of its streets were new and handsome, they were quiet as those of a sequestered hamlet at home: impoverished and oppressed by the invaders, their inhabitants were few, and those poor and dejected in appearance. The scenery, however, was beautiful; the winding shores, the dark waters of the Straits, the high mountains of the purest green, and the variously tinted groves of aromatic trees, all combined to render the place charming. The smooth bosom of the glassy sea vividly reflected the landscape: but we looked in vain for that wondrous phenomenon, the Fairy Morgana; who was so condescending, a few years before, as to display her coral palaces thrice to the Dominican Frà Antonio Minaci. Less favoured by the fair mermaid, we beheld neither inverted fleets, nor submarine cities; and, after a canter along the Marina, adjourned to the Café Britannica to dine.

In the evening, as we sat sipping our wine at

the open windows, enjoying the cool west wind from the Straits, and observing the passers-by—for the streets became a little more animated, as the men turned out to smoke their cigars and talk politics, the women to see them and promenade—a crowd beneath the balcony attracted our attention.

"An improvisatore," said Castelermo, as the notes of a guitar were heard. "Shall I give him a theme!"

"Certainly: but what shall it be! The Fall of Rhodez?"

"You shall hear: the capture of Scylla."

He drew a card from his case, wrote something on the back of it with a pencil and threw it over the balcony. In the midst of the crowd stood a young man, in the common but graceful garb of the province, with a broad scarlet ribband encircling his hat, the front of which was adorned by a loyalist cockade of the same hue. His jacket of green plush was gaily embroidered, a broad white shirt-collar was folded over it, yellow cotton breeches, a green silk sash and leather gaiters finished his attire; but there was something very jaunty, intelligent, gay, and impudent in his rosy face and *tout ensemble*. His mandolin announced him to be one of the improvisatari: wandering minstrels, or itinerant storytellers.

I know not whether those men are worthy of the name of inspired poets; but so wonderful is

their talent for versification, that some of the better class of them have been known to produce, extempore, a five-act tragedy, and an epic, divided into cantos and having a regular plot, characters and dialogues: all maintained in octave-syllabic rhyme. I had often encountered them in Sicily, where, by the wayside and among the mountains, their songs had cheered the tedium of many a long march, and had bestowed many a ducat upon them; regarding the wanderers as representatives of the ancient troubadours or minnesingers, once so common over the whole of Europe: but the modern minstrel we encountered at Reggio provoked me extremely.

"Benissimo!" cried he, while coins of every description showered from all quarters into the high crown of his inverted hat. "The illustrious cavalier has given me a gallant theme: Madonna aid me to do it justice! Signori, you will hear a story of the brave English captain, who took the castle of Scylla for King Ferdinand, and so gained the love of a fair Italian signora."

"Bravissimo!" cried the men, and the women clapped their hands exultingly.

Castelermo glanced at me with a droll smile, and we both burst into a fit of laughter.

"Impossible! the fellow cannot mean me!" said I.

"You shall hear. Ah! the prelude—hear him

—excellent! He excels Andrea Marone in verse; and our fair Corilla, the gifted peasant girl of Pistoia, who, amid the roar of a hundred cannon, was crowned queen of the gentle art at Rome, could not finger the mandolin more lightly, or with better taste. Basta! he should make his fortune!"

Imagine my surprise, on hearing the improvisatore give forth, extempore, to his eager, silent, and gaping audience, a song or poem of some thirty or forty long verses, in very tolerable *ottiva rima*, descriptive of the siege and storm of Scylla, in which, under the name of Claudio Dundazo, I was continually mentioned in a strain of most extravagant compliment, as the *valoroso capitano*, and most gallant *cavaliere* in the world. What annoyed me most, was that the name of Bianca d'Alfieri had not escaped the minstrel; who made her the heroine of his impudent epic.

"Oh! Castelermo—by the Lord! this is too ridiculous. I care not about myself; but Bianca's name to be used thus, for amusing the rabble of Reggio!" said I, starting up. "How the proud girl's cheek would flush, if she knew of this! You gave him the theme."

"The theme, merely.—Hush!" added the knight, detaining me, as the improvisatore concluded, describing our joyous marriage in a splendid cathedral, with incense burning, bells ringing, and priests praying. After a grand invocation of all the

saints—to whom he described us as vowing several pounds of excellent wax candle, whilst a magnificent petticoat was promised to Our Lady of Burello—the bard concluded: once more he inverted his hat; into which we each threw our mite.

"His profession must be the best in Italy," said I, on beholding the shower of coins which rained into the amply-brimmed receiver—the clanking dollar, the ringing carlino, and the tinkling bajocch.

"He has acquitted himself well: Corilla herself could not have done better; and, believe me, I pay the wanderer no ordinary compliment in saying so."

"But he must be cautioned against using the name of the Signora d'Alfieri in future."

"Already he has gone, signor," replied the knight; "and your threats and requests he would neither hear nor obey. The improvisatori will find the celebration of the fall of Scylla the most popular theme in the Calabrias; where all rejoice that the horse of Naples once more spreads its wings over the last stronghold of Napoleon in the province. Did you not observe how his enthusiasm enabled him to acquit himself, and how he seemed to rejoice in his wondrous art? While describing the night attack on Scylla, his breast seemed to pant with ardour, and his eyes sparkled with animation: his swarthy cheek glowed crim-

son, while his rapid and liquid words enchained his listening audience. He is a handsome fellow: at that moment he seemed beautiful, and all the women were in raptures with him. Yet how still they remained, as if a spell was upon them, until he concluded; and then burst forth the universal shout of 'Excellentissimo—oh! most excellent!'"

On our return to Scylla, as I dismounted, throwing the reins to my groom, he informed me that an Italian general officer was waiting for me at the house of Signora Pia on some business of importance. Startled by this communication, I hurried to my billet, and found the supposed general to be old Zaccheo Andronicus; who, in his gorgeous chasseur's livery, might easily be mistaken for some officer by Mr. Bob Brown, whose perceptions of things, beyond the heel-post of the stable, were none of the clearest.

I joyously welcomed "the old grey Grecian;" who had recovered from his wound, and was now bearer of a letter from Bianca, in answer to one despatched the night before Scylla was stormed. I consigned him, forthwith, to the care of my padrona; and hurried away, to enjoy, in solitude, the delight of perusing Bianca's first—and, as it proved, her last—letter.

Written in her pretty little running hand, it began with the usual address of "*caro signor;*" but my heart leaped, on finding the fair girl using the frank and more endearing phrase of "anima

mia." The viscontessa begged to be remembered to me: she had lost an enormous sum at faro last night, with the last of her suite of brilliants. Luigi was slowly recovering from the effects of his wound; but his peace of mind was gone for ever. To hasten his recovery, his mother had thrice vowed a solemn pilgrimage to the cave of St. Rosalia, in Sicily; but had as often abandoned the attempt, and vowed candles to San Ugo instead: since which he had begun to recover more rapidly, and all at the villa had no doubt that the saint had interceded in his behalf. She applauded my conduct at Scylla; and, to me, her praise was more valuable, and more highly prized, than that of the generals. She had perused all the despatches in the *Gazetta Britannica,* and her heart had leaped alternately with pride and joy—with fear and horror—at the narration. "Oh! Claude," she continued, "you know not how proud I am of you: how I rejoice at your escape! But Francesca, my sister—my unhappy sister!—we can discover no trace of her: her fate is enveloped in mystery. We have every horror to fear; for Petronio the Bishop of Cosenza, though deemed a saint by the peasantry, is a bold and bad-hearted man; and, Francesca in his power!—oh! Madonna! Would that you could visit us: her loss and Luigi's illness fill us with perplexity and dismay."

Next day, I despatched an answer by the chas-

seur, promising to solicit the general for a few days' leave of absence, to visit the villa. But this idea was never realized in the manner I expected; as I was despatched, on urgent duty, to the Adriatic shore, a day or two afterwards.

CHAPTER XIV.

NAVARRO.—REVENGE!

ALTHOUGH I had no doubt that this honourable personage, for the purpose of disgracing me or endangering my life, had, in that true national spirit of revenge of which every day brought forth some new example, forged the letter which Gascoigne received; still I had not sufficient proof of the fact, either to "call him out," or place him under arrest. We met daily in the garrison, and glances of undisguised hostility from him were duly answered by those of contempt from me: but such a state of things, between men wearing swords, could not endure long.

A whisper of suspicion—most injurious to the honour of Navarro, as a man of courage and loyalty—was circulated through the brigade. Shunned, scorned, and placed *in Coventry* by the officers, slighted and regarded with curious eyes by the soldiers, his baseness recoiled upon himself: he led a life of solitary wretchedness and misery. But

he was a traitor and Buonapartist at heart, and in close correspondence with Regnier; to whom he soon deserted: yet not before committing one of those atrocities which disgraced Italy then, as often as they do a certain western island now.

Having so many adventures to describe, and so much to relate, I must be brief. My quarrel with Navarro soon came to a crisis: being sent to him by the general, with a message relative to the re-fortifying of Scylla, I was so provoked by his dogged insolence, that I laid my riding switch pretty severely across his back; a challenge ensued, and we were to fight next morning, in the most remote part of the fortress.

Cool and determined, though exasperated, I went to bed without the least anxiety: I had no doubt of coming off victorious; and, hardened as I was by the bloodshed of service, would have cared no more for shooting Navarro than killing a partridge. *Now* it appears to me singular with what deliberation Castelermo and I made our preparations over-night; rolling six pistol cartridges, fixing the flints, oiling the springs, and putting all in order to start by daybreak. After supping as usual, we retired to bed; each giving the other solemn injunctions not to sleep too long.

I have already stated, that in consequence of the crowded state of the billets, we both occupied the same room.

About daybreak, I started, and awoke: the

business on hand rushed upon my memory. I sat up in bed and reflected for a moment on the events another hour might bring forth: my train of thought was arrested by observing a current of air agitating the muslin curtains of my couch, and causing them to float about like banners. I leaped out, and, to my surprise, perceived the casement unbolted and open; admitting, at once, the cold sea-breeze, and dull grey morning light.

"Castelermo — signor, rouse! It wants but twenty minutes to the time, by my watch."

"And ten by mine," said Gascoigne, putting in his head: he was closely muffled up in his cloak. "What! only turning out; eh, Dundas?"

"It is all very well for you to be in a hurry," said I, pettishly. "You Irishmen take these affairs quite as matters of course. I'll be ready in a minute: a chill morning for a shooting party," I added, with a poor attempt at a laugh. "Where is Macnesia?"

"Below, with his instruments: but your friend, the knight, sleeps soundly, Hallo, Castelermo!"

There was still no reply. Dressing in haste, I called often, but received no answer; and supposing that he must have risen, I drew back the curtain of his sleeping place to assure myself, when a scarcely articulate exclamation of horror escaped my lips. Imagine my grief and astonishment, to behold our poor friend lying drenched in his blood, pale and lifeless!

I placed my hand on his heart; it was cold and

still. Gascoigne bent over the window, and shouted—

"Macnaisha—Macnaisha—you devil you, come here!" The doctor arrived in a moment, but the cavalier was beyond his skill: there was not the slightest warmth or pulsation. The gallant, the noble, and chivalric Castelermo had perished by the hand of a cowardly assassin. Buried to the very cross-guard, in his heart, a little ebony-hilted poniard was struck, with such force that some strength had to be exerted to draw it forth; and on my doing so a strip of paper, attached to the pommel, attracted our attention; it contained these words:—

"Let those who would avenge this insolent *Briton*, seek me among the ranks of the French at Cassano: a word I might have forgiven—a blow never.—*Pietro Navarro.*"

Although boiling with indignation, I shuddered at the fate I had so narrowly escaped. For *me* it was that the fatal stroke had been intended; and I then remembered Castelermo's warning, to beware of the cowardly Navarro. Clambering up by a garden-wall, the miscreant had reached our casement, which he had contrived to open noiselessly; but on entering the room he had mistaken the unfortunate cavalier's bed for mine, and my friend had thus perished in my stead.

"The blow must have been struck about midnight," said Macnesia.

Only an hour after we retired to rest: perhaps

Navarro had been outside the window during the greater part of the night watching our preparations for the intended meeting next morning. But with three hundred of our soldiers we had all a narrower escape from this Italian's hatred and duplicity: of which the reader shall hear more anon.

The Signoressa Pia was overwhelmed with consternation and dismay on learning that the knight of Malta had perished under her roof. Followed by a mob of fishermen, the podestà, with his clerk, arrived and committed to writing a statement of the facts; while I preserved the poniard and the assassin's signature for production and evidence, should a day of retribution ever arrive.

Enraged at this act of sacrilege, the populace searched every nook and corner in the town; two or three old knights of Castelermo's order, who resided in the neighbourhood, armed and mounted their followers and servants, who, in conjunction with those of the podestà, and a detachment of our light troops, scoured the whole country round: yet without success. Navarro was nowhere to be found: but we soon after learned that he had sought refuge behind the lines of his friends, the French; who still remained entrenched at Cassano, awaiting the slow advance of Massena.

In the solitary mountain-chapel of San Bartolommeo, poor Castelermo was interred with military honours: the grenadiers of Sir Louis de Watteville, drawn up outside the edifice, fired

three volleys over it, while the coffin was lowered down in front of the altar; where he now lies with his mantle, sword and spurs, like a knight "of old Lisle Adam's days."

He was one of the last cavaliers of the original order, which for two hundred and sixty-eight years had possessed the Isle of Malta. Since 1800, when France ceded the Rock to Britain, they have been gradually declining in power and disappearing; and, although at the petty courts of Italy a few aged men are sometimes seen with the eight-pointed cross of the order on their bosoms, the Knights of Rhodes and St. John of Jerusalem have, in effect, passed away: like Castelermo himself, their glory is now with the things that were.

Unfortunately I was not present to witness the celebration of my friend's obsequies. On the close of this day, which had commenced so inauspiciously, I had returned with the Light Infantry, and wearied by a long search among the woods and hills, was sitting dejectedly in my billet alone, when Pierce, the general's orderly, arrived with a message, that I was wanted by his master. I took up my sabre, and followed him to the antique mansion where I had first seen Sir John Stuart, on my arrival at Scylla.

The General was engaged in writing: the table was covered with despatches, returns, reports, and morning-states; a map of Italy and a pair of com-

passes lay close by. The rosy light of the setting sun streamed through the barred and latticed window on his stern Scottish features, his silver hairs and faded uniform; and the tarnished aigulette and oak-leaves, a cross of the Bath, a medal for Maida, and clasps for other services, all blackened by powder-smoke and the effects of the weather, gave him a very service-born and soldier-like aspect.

"Pierce, hand Captain Dundas a chair, and wait outside."

"Help yourself, Claude," said he, pushing two decanters of Lacrima and Zante towards me, after asking a few hurried questions concerning our fruitless chase after the runaway engineer. "Fill your glass: the Zante is tolerable; and just excuse me for five minutes, will you?" He continued writing, and then folded a long and very official-like document. "A journey is before you," said he; "and as you will have to start to morrow morning by day-break, light marching order is best."

"For where, Sir John?"

"Crotona: I would not have sent you back there, but Lascelles of yours has not returned from Cassano, and Lieutenant-Colonel Moore is not available. Will you believe it? I have received orders from the ministry to abandon the Calabrias forthwith, or do that which is the same; to order back the expedition to Sicily, leaving

garrisons in the strong places we have taken. These troops will, of course, become the prisoners of Massena; who (I am informed by a despatch from General Sherbrooke) has arrived at Cassano, and is there concentrating a force, which will soon burst over both provinces like a torrent: so that Maida was won, the citadel of Crotona taken, and the castles of St. Amanthea, Monteleone and Scylla all gallantly stormed, for nothing. We might as well have remained in peace in our barracks at Palermo. But, however foolish and contrary to my own conviction, those orders must be obeyed. One of the Sicilian government gallies will take you hence to-morrow, and put you on board the *Amphion* in the Adriatic. Give my compliments to Captain Hoste, with this order to take on board Colonel Macleod's command from Crotona, and convey it straight to Messina. To Macleod you will convey these instructions: to deliver over the citadel, with its cannon and stores, to five hundred of the free Calabri; who will in future be its garrison, and be commanded by Major the Cavaliere del Castagno, or any other officer whom that insubordinate fellow the Visconte Santugo may appoint. A detachment of De Watteville's shall hold Monteleone; and Captain Piozzi, with a few of the Italian Guards, the castle of St. Amanthea. I am resolved that as few British troops as possible shall be sacrificed by the folly of our friends in authority. Your

regiment is the best in Sicily, and a wing, or detachment, of it will garrison Scylla; which is of the utmost importance to us as a key to Italy: but if hard pressed by Massena, they can easily abandon it under the protection of our shipping.

"To-morrow I return to the camp, to embark the main body of our army for Messina: you will, of course, come round with Macleod's Highlanders, and rejoin me at Palermo; where I hope we shall spend many a merry evening in talking over our campaign among the Apennines."

I was in a sort of a maze while the general so good-naturedly explained his plans and orders: in which I felt very little satisfaction. My thoughts were at the villa. To leave Calabria at present was, perhaps, to leave Bianca: a deadly blow to my air-built castles; unless Massena's legions marched south in time to change the intentions of our leader. Relying on the general's friendship, I had no doubt that my return to Sicily might be delayed for a time; therefore I did not hesitate to solicit the appointment of commandant at Scylla, with the local rank of major in Italy.

"You are but a young officer, and the charge is a most important one," said he, impressively: "but you are getting tired of me, Dundas?"

"Far from it, Sir John; the staff ——"

"I am afraid I task you too severely: well, as a punishment for your discontent, you shall have Scylla to keep, so long as our friend Massena will

permit. His advance will soon scare the garrison out of it. I cannot refuse you that which you underwent so many toils and risks to attain: the nomination will appear shortly in general orders,' (he made a memorandum) "but on *one* condition it is granted, that you do not spend too much of your time at St. Eufemio."

I coloured at the inuendo, while the old fellow laughed at what he considered a hit, and held the decanter of glowing Zante between him and the sunlight. He shook me heartily by the hand, and, buckling up the despatches in my sabre-tache, I hurried back to my billet to desire my servant to pack my valise, and have all in order for starting by daybreak.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAVALLO MARINO.

THE report of the morning gun had scarcely pealed away from the ramparts ere Brown appeared by my bedside, and the reveillé rang through the echoing stillness of the castle above me. In barracks there are few sensations more agreeable than that of being awakened by the reveillé on the dawn of a summer's day: gradually its sweet low wail steals upon the waking senses, sadly and slowly at first, then increasing in strength and power till the full body of music floats through the morning air, redoubled by the echoes of the empty barrack-courts; when as the measure from the slowness of a Scottish lament increases to the rapidity of a reel, the drums roll impatiently as if to rouse the tardy sleepers.

"Well, Bob, what kind of morning is it?" said I, scrambling up, shivering and yawning.

"Cold and raw, sir—the drums sound as if muffled, a sure sign of a damp morning. The galley's boat is at the castle stairs, sir."

It was chilly and dark daybreak: the ramparts of Scylla looked black and wet; the sentinels buttoned up in their dark great-coats kept close within turret and box; a thick fog floated on the surface of the sea, and rolled in eddying volumes around the caverned rock and the hills of Milia. With Bob's assistance I soon donned my tight leather breeches and jack-boots, and shaved hurriedly by candle-light, using the case of my watch in lieu of a dressing-glass. It was a morning of that kind when it requires all one's resolution to leave a comfortable bed, and turn out in five minutes, to face a drizzly fog and cold sea-breeze: so tightening my waist-belt, I threw my cloak round me, bade a hasty adieu to my kind Padrona and her dishes of polenta, and sallied forth.

The boat awaited me at the sea stair-case, a flight of steps hewn in the solid rock, and descending from the castle to the water, which was rolling in snowy foam on those at the bottom, I threw my portmanteau on board, and leaped after it. Brown saluted and bade me adieu, while I warned him, on peril of his head, to attend to Cartouche and see him duly fed and watered, as I used to do myself.

The boat was shoved off, and we shot away into the mist from the lofty rock of Scylla; which, with its castled summit, loomed like some tall giant through the flying vapour. The oars dipped and rose from the wave in measured time, while the

boatmen chanted and sang of the glories of Massaniello the fisherman of Amalfi, and of the mad friar Campanello, who led the Calabrian revolters in 1590.

In the pauses of their chorus, I could hear the boom of the waves in the hollow caverns, sending forth sounds like the howling of dogs and the roaring of Scylla's ravening wolves, who abode among darkness and misery, and rendered the spot so terrible to the ancient mariner: but the noise died away as the distance increased. The fog arose from the face of the waters, the rising sun began to gild the summits of the Sicilian and Italian hills, and I beheld the war-galley lying, like a many-legged monster, on the bosom of the brightening deep. We steered alongside, the oars were laid in, and the side-ropes and ladder were lowered into the boat; which two sailors held steady, at stem and stern, by means of hooks. The galley was named the Cavallo Marino, and a gigantic sea-horse reared up at her prow: the same emblem appeared carved upon her quarters, and the name was painted, in large red letters, on the broad white blade of every sweep. She was a high vessel, pulled by fifty oars, each of them at least forty feet long and worked by five miserable slaves, half naked: they were chained by the wrists to the oar, or else fastened to their seats; between which there ran, fore and aft, a long plank or gangway, where the boatswain or task-

master walked about, applying his lash on the bare shoulders of those unhappy wretches who did not exert themselves sufficiently.

The sailors of the Cavallo Marino, about fifteen in number, were stationed forward; she was armed with a large thirty-two pound forecastle-piece, and manned by two hundred and fifty slaves, the dregs of the prisons and dungeons of Naples and Sicily: assassins, bandits, runaway priests, and villains of all descriptions, steeped in guilt of every imaginable kind. She had a captain, two lieutenants, and a few petty officers, who wore the government uniform: they were grouped on her lofty poop when I ascended on board. I was received, according to the custom of that service, by a cheer from the slaves: but, alas! such a cheer! It was more like a yell from the regions of darkness; for the boatswain and his mates used their rattans unsparingly, to increase the joy of my arrival. Many a bitter malediction was growled by the Italians, whose eyes gleamed like those of coiled-up snakes; many a pious cry to God broke from the swarthy Algerines, who were there doing penance for the slavery to which their countrymen subjected those unhappy Christians who, by conquest or shipwreck, fell under their horrible dominion. A Moor of Barbary, or a corsair of Algeria, formed the fifth slave at every sweep. The poop was armed with a few brass swivel guns; and the standard, having the arms of

Sicily quartered with those of Naples, was displayed from a tall staff rigged aft, and hung drooping in deep folds over the water, which it swept at times, when agitated by the morning breeze.

The officers were the only men on board who wore their side-arms: the slaves were all too securely chained to be dreaded; notwithstanding their number.

By the captain, Guevarra, a pompous little Sicilian, I was formally welcomed on board "His Majesty's galley, *Sea-Horse*" (a phrase he was very fond of repeating), and invited to breakfast with the officers in their little den under the poop. Here we were often in darkness, as the long folds of the standard obscured the windows; but when the wind wafted it aside, the full radiance of the rising sun glared in through the openings, on the light blue uniforms, silver epaulettes, and weather-beaten visages of my entertainers; on the glass cups of smoking coffee and thick chocolate, a savoury ham, with piles of eggs, pyramids of bread, and all the appurtenances of the breakfast table.

"Per Baccho!" said the captain—who, though a little man, was armed with a prodigious sabre, and wore a most extravagant pair of moustachios—"per Baccho! signor," he continued, with a most bland Sicilian smile, "it would have been a particular favour had the general sent you off to us

last night: by this time we should have doubled Spartivento; and, as there is some word of a French line-of-battle ship being up the Gulf of Tarento, his valour who commands the *Amphion* will be impatient to be joined by his Majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*.—Lieutenant, I'll trouble you for the maccaroons.—We shall have some rough weather before evening, and these double-banked galleys ship every sea that strikes them.—The muffins? with pleasure, signor.—And, truly, one is safer anchored close by the Tower of the Lantern, than exposed to a lee shore and all the damnable currents that run round Spartivento in the evening. But, believe me, signor, that his Majesty's galley *Sea-Horse*—Boy! pass the word for more coffee."

"Si Signor Capitano," replied a little olive-cheeked urchin in shirt and trousers, who vanished with the silver coffee-pot.

"Considering the beauty of the morning, and the unclouded splendour of the sun, I trust," said I, "with all due submission to your better judgment, that you may prove a false prophet."

"Impossible, signor!" replied the Sicilian; who was doing ample justice to all the good things before him. "I have sailed in—an egg, thank you—in his Majesty's galleys, for forty years, and know every shoal, current, rock and sign of the Italian seas, better than the boasted Palinurus of old—Better? said I. Bah! I hold

him to be an arrant blockhead, and no seaman, to resign his helm to Signor Morpheus; whose 'Stygian dew' I believe to have been a big-bellied flask of most potent Gioja or French brandy."

"But Palinurus was an accursed heathen, like his master, misnamed the 'pious Œneas;' and having no saint to patronize him, could expect nothing else than mishaps," said one of the lieutenants.

"Right, Vinoni," replied the captain; "but we, sailors of his Majesty of Sicily, are the Madonna's peculiar care. Faugh! a tarantella in the cream-pot and fire-flies in the marmalade. Yes, Signor Dundas," he continued, resuming his former theme, "there is a regular hurricane gathering; though from what point I cannot quite determine. Last night the yellow moon rose above the Calabrian hills, surrounded by a luminous halo; a sure sign of a tough gale, which Madonna avert: what is worse, we may have it in our teeth, blowing right a-head, before we round yonder Capo del Armi. On our voyage from Palermo, yesterday, as we passed through the Lipari Isles, they were covered by a white vapour; a sure sign of a north-east wind: but though the shore lies on our lee, his Majesty's galley can always use her sweeps, and give it a wide berth."

"But did you not remark, signor," said Vinoni,

" that before we came in sight of the Pharo, the mist had floated away from the Lipari, and the mouth of Stromboli threw clear flames across the sky, whilst the waves smoked and growled with a remarkable noise? all sure tokens of a land brecze."

" Right, Vinoni!" said the captain, whose opinion was generally formed on that of his lieutenant; " right: corpo! I feel it blowing down the Straits at this moment, and the white foam that curls before it on the water, announces a coming squall."

Leaving these weatherwise Italians to settle the matter as they chose, I walked forward to observe the accommodation and construction of this peculiar vessel. She was now under weigh; and though strained from stem to stern by every stroke of the sweeps, she moved through the water with a motion so easy and rapid, that her officers had little occasion to dread either contrary winds or tides.

The broad-bladed sweeps brushed the ocean into foam, which roared in surf beneath the sharp bows, boiling away under the counter, and leaving astern a long white wake in the glittering sea. The sun was now up, and his rosy morning light cast a warm glow over land and ocean.

Captain Guevarra stood beside me on the poop, and pointed out the different towns, mountains, and headlands, as we moved down

the Straits: his observations proved amusing, from the strange compound of knowledge and ignorance, religion, superstition, and vanity they exhibited.

We were soon in mid-channel: the fruitful shore of old Trinacria, studded with innumerable towns and villages, nestling on the green hills, embosomed among the richest foliage or shining along the sandy and sunny beach, rose in succession on the view, while piles of picturesque mountains closed the background; and soon, chief amongst them all, gigantic Etna reared up its mighty cone, appearing to rise from the watery horizon on our starboard bow. From its yawning crater a lengthened column of light vapour ascended into the pure air, in one steady, straight, and unbroken line, piercing the pale-blue immensity of space, and rising to an altitude, where, in the soft regions of upper air, it was for ever lost to the eye.

As the range of the Neptunian hills, and the town of Messina with its large cathedral—its numerous churches and convents, its terraced streets sweeping round swelling eminences, and its busy harbour crowded by a forest of masts —closed, lessened, and sank astern; the bay of Reggio, on the other hand, opened to our view, with all the spires and casements of its town gleaming in the beams of the morning sun: the high peaks of its hills behind covered to the

summit with dark green pines, and fragrant orange or citron trees. The galley-slaves were now pulling with all their strength, to make headway against the strong current which runs towards Cape Pelorus; but we soon got clear of the eddies, and moved through the water with astonishing speed.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RACE.—GALLEY-SLAVES.

"YONDER is Rhegium, signor," said the Captain Guevarra; "where Eolus dwelt before he removed his government over to Sicily; and where he sold fair winds to mariners, and tied the foul ones up in paper bags—the cursed heathen! And yet it would be some advantage if such commodities could be purchased in these vulgar modern days. I have known the time when I would have given sixty pieces of gold for a single puff of fair wind: but that was before I had the honour of commanding his Majesty's galley *Sea-Horse* and all those stout rogues who work it.—Ah! Madonna mia!" he ejaculated, crossing himself, as we walked on the weather side of the poop; "what is all this I have been saying? Our Lady of Sicily forgive me the thought, and keep me contented with such winds as pass over the sea, without buying from heathen, heretic, or devil!—Viva! how bravely the old *Sea-Horse* shoots through the

water! Believe me, Signor Dundas, there is not another galley in the service of his Sicilian Majesty equalling this, for strength, speed, and beauty of mould."

"Yet there is a little vessel yonder, cracking on under every stitch of canvass, which seems able and disposed to beat you."

"Beat the *Sea-Horse*—beat his Majesty's galley!" cried the little commander, stamping his feet on the deck. "Corpo di Baccho! if any man on board, save yourself, signor, had even hinted that such a thing was possible, I would have dropped him from the yard-arm with a forty-pound shot at his heels: I would, this instant—I, Gandolfo Guevarra."

After this outburst, I did not venture on another remark; and we walked up and down in silence. Between us and Cape Pillari, a swift little Maltese schooner, of a most rakish cut, was flying through the water, with her snow-white canvass shining in the sun, and bellying out to the breeze; while her flashing sweeps were moving, stroke for stroke, with those of the galley, which she was evidently leaving astern. She was low-built, almost level with the water, which she cleft like an arrow.

"Ola! the boatswain," cried Guevarra, perspiring with rage, which made every fibre of his little body quiver, while he twisted his long moustachios and looked fierce as a rat at bay. "By the blood of Gennaro! that villainous craft is leaving us

astern. Shall a runaway of Malta, laden with base merchandize, beat his Majesty's galley the *Sea-Horse?* No, no—Madonna! Quick, rascal, there! fly-flap the shoulders of the oarsmen, or your own shall smart before sunset.—And you, signor—master-gunner."

"Si signor illustrissimo."

"Ready—the gun there, forward; to teach these vagabonds to keep their distance, and not attempt to rival those who sail under his Majesty's pennant."

The forecastle-piece was double-shotted and cleared away for action; while the boatswain and his mates flew from stem to stern, lashing unmercifully the bare shoulders of the slaves, with as little remorse as one would the flanks of a vicious horse. Tremendous curses and horrible blasphemies followed this application of the rattans, and the unhappy wretches toiled until their swarthy skins were deluged in perspiration, which mingled with the blood streaming from their lacerated backs. The storm of maledictions soon died away, their exhausted strength requiring that they should work in silence; and I looked on, in pity and disgust, while the miserable beings toiled at the ponderous oars, with measured action which strained every muscle to its utmost power of tension. On glancing along the rows of black-browed, unshaven, and lowering visages, I read one expression in them all—a fearful one! Of

what demoniac minds were those stern eyes the index! A thirst for vengeance, rather than for freedom, animated their savage Italian hearts: every bosom was a hell of pent-up passion; every man a chained fiend.

The sweeps were moved by each gang rising simultaneously from their bench, and then resuming the sitting position; again rising, and again sitting, without a moment's respite from toil; and if any man failed to exert himself sufficiently, every slave at that particular sweep received the same number of blows as the delinquent. Such, Guevarra informed me, was the unjust rule in his Majesty's galleys. One poor wretch dropped dead; and while a shower of blows was distributed to his four comrades, to make them work harder, the iron-hearted boatswain, unlocked with a master-key the padlock which held the chain, and the body was flung into the deep. Many a glance of envy followed it, as it disappeared beneath the bright green water; and once more groans of grief and growls of smothered rage broke forth: but, though the slaves toiled on till the galley seemed to fly through the water, the little scampavia still kept ahead of her.

"Work! work! or beware the scurlada," cried the boatswain, who now flourished a gigantic whip, beneath the whisk of which every slave cowered instinctively. "Ahi, Fra Maso, different work this from mumbling latin at Palermo," he cried;

bestowing a burning lash on the back of one who had been a priest; "work, work, sloths, if you wish not your hides flayed off. Ola! you, there, with the nose like Ovid, and face like the O of Giotto, dost think thou art selling paste buckles at Messina once more? Bend to the oar Maestro Naso, or feel *that!*"

A yell burst from the unhappy Israelite, as the terrible lash ploughed up his tender skin, while the task-master continued:—"Work, work! pull away larboard and starboard: give way, my beauties, if you would have life left you to behold the sun set. Bravo, my merry little devil at the bow-oar; you seem a very Cicero, and look as if born with the sweep in your hand."

A laugh, rising into a yell, at the bow, attracted my attention, and on going forward I perceived the hunchback, Gaspare Truffi, tugging away at the first oar, which he pulled in conjunction with three men: his strength being deemed equal to that of two slaves.

As I stepped along the gangway, scowling and imploring glances were cast upon me, by the swart and naked oarsmen. I could not resist saying, in a low voice,

"Poor men! truly I pity you!"

These words were not thrown away.

"Madonna bless thee, Signor Inglese," said he who had been called Fra Maso; "like thy countrymen, thou art merciful!"

"Merciful! bah!" cried Truffi; "have I not seen them scourge their brave soldiers like dogs—even as we are now scourged!"

I watched the exertions of the powerful hunchback with surprise: he toiled away with what appeared most decided good-will, without receiving a single blow from the boatswain, although his conical hump and shaggy breast presented prominent marks for the taskmaster's scourge. His aspect was grotesque beyond description, as he tugged away and strained until every muscle in his deformed body seemed about to snap; his matted black hair overhung his fierce twinkling eyes, and a forest of the same material fringed his capacious mouth, which every instant sent forth a yell or a shout of laughter. On my approach, he bent to the oar with redoubled fury, raving and howling, while he spat towards me in token of hatred and undying enmity. With more astonishment than commiseration, with more disgust than pity, I regarded this curious little desperado; whose hideous form contrasted so strongly with the powerful and herculean frames of the other slaves: their bodies, naked to the waist, and having every muscle hardened to rigidity by excessive toil, presented in almost every instance perfect models for the artist and sculptor.

A half-stifled sob—a hurried exclamation—caused me to turn towards a fine-looking old slave, to whose antique contour of head and face additional

dignity was lent by a venerable beard, which swept his breast. Never shall I forget the glance with which his keen dark eyes regarded me: his features had all that noble regularity and proud contour which are often found in old Italian portraits; but there was a stern expression of care in them, and the hard contracted lines of his face showed a long acquaintance with grief, or an exquisite degree of mental agony. It was the Major Gismondo! Alas! how changed now was the brave old cavalry officer—the once gay cicisbeo of the fashionable viscontessa!

"Here! you here?" I exclaimed.

"Well may you wonder that I survive," said he, the blood suffusing his temples when our eyes met: but he was compelled to turn away; the whip of the boatswain at that moment descended on his shoulders, and I returned to the poop. My heart bled for the unmerited misery and degradation of the poor old man: but to converse with him was quite contrary to etiquette and orders. On questioning Guevarra concerning him—

"I trust, signor," said he, "you will excuse me; but it is impossible for a captain of his Majesty's galleys to know the biography of every rogue who tugs at the benches." He coloured with manifest confusion.

"A droll fellow that hunchback who pulls the bow-oar."

"Ah!" replied Guevarra, "a perfect imp of

Etna: I am very much indebted to my good friend, the Visconte Santugo, for sending him off to me yesterday. He was caught lurking near the villa D'Alfieri by the soldiers who guard it. Per baccho! I was half frightened when I saw him on board—ha, ha! he has all the aspect of a stunted Cyclope, and works so well that he has a fair prospect of being promoted to the rank of task-master. He laughs, chuckles, and sings incessantly; but for what reason is beyond my comprehension, as there is nothing here but hard work, heavy blows, and scanty provender—unless we except the honour of serving in his Majesty's galley *Sea-horse.* Diavolo!" he cried, rushing to the other side of the poop, "the Maltese schooner has passed us. Pull rascals—give way ye lubberly Padri—give way fore and aft! Shall the gallant Cavallo Marino, the flower of our galleys, and the peculiar care of our thrice blessed Madonna, be beaten by a d——d scampavia?" He bowed and crossed himself with great devotion before a little gilt figure of the Virgin, which occupied a niche in the centre of a row of brightly painted buckets, ranged along the top of the poop. But Madonna was sued in vain. Again the whistling rattans were flourished on all sides: even Gaspare Truffi did not escape, and his elfish yell sounded shrill as the whistle of a steam-engine when the blows descended on his naked hump.

On—on shot the scampavia, and the lofty galley

toiled after her in vain: the former carried a press of canvass sufficient to run her under the water, which flashed like blue fire before her sharp prow: and she shipped sea after sea, as we rounded the Capo del Armi, and the snow-clad summit of Etna sank beneath the dim horizon astern: the water was getting rough, the breeze increasing, and it was evident that she must take in sail or be capsized. A half-smothered cheer arose from her crew, who crowded her side, as they saw us rapidly dropping astern.

Boundless was the wrath of Guevarra: he stamped about the deck, while his long sword became entangled at every stride with his little bandy legs; he curled his bushy whiskers, fumed and blasphemed like a pagan. Save the slaves, all on board, more or less, partook of his chagrin: while smiling at his rage, even I could not avoid a feeling of annoyance; for one becomes jealous of being passed at sea, or beaten by a rival mail, or getting the "go-by" from a friend's team on a country road.

"By the miraculous blood of Gennaro! I will teach these mongrel curs, these Arabian Maltese, to beware how they try speed with his Majesty's galley. Is the gun ready there forward?"

"All ready, Signor Capitano," replied the gunner, taking the tompion from the lofty forecastle-piece, and lighting his match.

"Then give them a shot between wind and water. Madonna speed the ball—fire!"

The helmsman brought the galley's head round, and the thirty-two pounder was levelled and fired. The *Sea-Horse* shook with the concussion: the shot whistled over the water; a breach was made in the low bulwarks of the Maltese, and a shower of white splinters flew away to leeward. The schooner was immediately thrown in the wind: down came her fore and main topsails, her jib and staysail, like lightning on her deck; while the scarlet flag of Britain was run up to her gaff-peak. The galley shot ahead: her great latteen sail, that tapered away and aloft, was braced sharp up, and once more we flew forward; while the Maltese did not again begin to make sail, until she was a league or so astern.

"Bravissimo, *Sea-Horse!*" said Guevarra, clapping his hands in glee. "*Now* we are leaving her hand over hand."

In the ardour of the race he had not been paying due attention to his course; and, in keeping to seaward of the scampavia, which was probably bound for the Venetian Gulf, the galley was further from the land than she ought to have been: her head was turned northward; and, as we slowly approached the Apennine chain, the promontory of Hercules rose gradually on the view.

We now made but little progress: the breeze had died away; the heat of the day was intense,

for the sirocco was abroad, and the air was glittering with sulphury particles, blown, probably, from the peak of Etna. Wearied with their late exertions, the over-tasked slaves, exposed to the broiling sun, sat gazing listlessly, with their glaring and bloodshot eyes, on the glassy sea; and even the rattan of the drowsy and perspiring boatswain failed to rouse them from their apathy. The little way we made was solely owing to the large square mainsail; and, though the galley lay close to the scarcely perceptible current of air, our progress was not a mile an hour: yet, long before the setting sun began to redden the blue Ionian Sea, Guevarra had the mortification to see the little Maltese pull with her sweeps round the promontory and disappear.

During the weary noon of that scorching day, while the wretched slaves sat naked at their oars, exposed to the fierce bright sun, Guevarra and his officers were seated under a cool awning on the poop, enjoying their siesta, after a luncheon of light fruits and lighter wines; while the boatswain, his mates, the gunner and *his* mates, chewed their maccaroni and drank cold water under a similar contrivance on the forecastle. Miserable was the plight of the poor unpitied slaves: chained to the oaken bench, which formed their seat when they toiled and their bed when they slept; and on which they were alternately exposed by noon to the broiling heat of an Italian meridian, and by

night to the chill blasts of the ocean; half naked, continually suffering castigation, fed on the worst and coarsest food, and packed so closely that dreadful diseases were continually breaking out among them.

The day became closer: not a breath stirred the languid breezeless air; the sea-birds floated on the still bosom of the glassy deep, and the mainsail flapped heavily on the mast as the galley rolled on the slow heaving ground swell. She was drifted shoreward by the currents: in the afternoon we were close to the land, and I began to fear that my journey to Crotona would be of longer duration than the general expected.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REVOLT OF THE GALLEY SLAVES.

It was night—beautiful night! The cold pale moon gleamed on the waste of waters, on the silent shore, on the hills of Magna Græcia, and on the wide Ionian sea. Ten thousand luminous animalculæ glittered in its briny depth, as if to rival the bright stars above; while the white columns on a distant promontory—the last relics of a people, a power, and a creed that have passed away—the wooded mountains and the pebbled beach, and Albanian Bova, the towers of Theodosia, La Bianca, and other towns, rose in succession on our view, all glittering in the radiance of that broad and lovely moon.

A guitar broke the silence, accompanied by a clear voice: it was young Vinoni chanting a verse of Pignotti's Novella, beginning with "Donne leggiadre, allorche," &c.

"Woman enchanting! when I look on thy form,
And behold the soft graces of lip, cheek, and hair;
And thy bosom of snow, nature's loveliest charm,
Ah! who would not kiss it, and love to die there?

"Sweet to behold the unsullied snow!
The dark eye that rolls ——"

"Come, come, caro tenente, stop your twangling, and make sail on the galley!" cried Guevarra, starting up from the sleep he had enjoyed under the awning since dinner. "Corpo di Baccho! here comes the breeze at last," he continued, snuffing it over the quarter; "and the tunny-fish—ah! the fine fellows, see how they are passing us in shoals."

Humming "Donne leggiadre," &c., the lieutenant relinquished his guitar, and looked intently over the quarter.

"Ha! Signor Guevarra, I knew that the clear fires of Stromboli betokened something—behold!" As he spoke, a heavy and dense bank of clouds spread from the northern horizon, and gradually veiled the whole sky; the moon disappeared, or shot forth her lustre only at times on the whitening waves: the sea became black, and the land loomed close and high. The mainsail filled as the breeze freshened, and the boatswain warned the slaves to prepare for hard work.

The darkness was now dense; and I felt, I knew not why, considerable anxiety as to the issue of the night. The little captain generally about this time retired to his cabin, to enjoy, alone, his cigar and a glass of lacrima; resigning the command to Vinoni. The features of the young lieutenant

were clouded with care, or by some gloomy presentiment: he often walked to windward to watch the weather and look at the waves, which the rushing breeze edged with white. Suddenly he ordered the great mainsail to be furled, and all made snug for the night.

"Out sweeps: give way there forward!" The shrill pipe of the boatswain echoed his command, and a commotion immediately took place among the slaves, who had hitherto been sitting silent and motionless in the dark. From the bosom of the startled deep a fierce yell arose. Imagine my astonishment and the horror of Vinoni, on beholding the galley-slaves, instead of resuming their monotonous labour at the oar, spring up at once from their benches, and rush, some forward and some aft, shouting like devils or maniacs broken loose.

A desperate but momentary conflict ensued: most of the seamen were tossed overboard, while the rest were driven below the forecastle. Vinoni, brave to rashness, sprang to the front of the poop, and drawing from his belt pistols (which the galley-officers were never without) he fired, and a slave fell bleeding on the deck; then rushing to the swivel-guns he slued them round to sweep the waist: but they were without matches and useless. Instinctively I drew my sabre; but old Gismondo threw his arms around me.

"Madman!" he exclaimed, would you tempt the unfettered fury of two hundred and fifty ruf-

fians—the fiercest in Italy: men whom years of slavery, tyranny, and toil have transformed into demons? Sheath your sword, signor—I alone can protect you." I returned my sabre to its scabbard: but a groan burst from me on beholding what followed.

"Corpo di Baccho! what is all this?" cried the captain, rushing upon the poop; "eh! a mutiny, —a revolt in his Majesty's——" in a moment he was borne over, and dashed to the deck by the hunchback, who instantly brained poor Vinoni with one blow of a handspike. With one of his elfish laughs he was rushing upon me, whirling his club aloft; and, but for the stern intervention of Signor Gismondo, my campaign and my days had ended together. By what agency he exercised authority over these lawless spirits, I know not; but the most forward of them slunk away to continue the work of slaughter elsewhere: and frightful were the outcries and din around us, as the taskmasters and mariners perished beneath the weaponless hands, and even the teeth, of those over whom they had so long tyrannized. In one minute the galley was in the possession of the slaves; and the unfortunate captain, his boatswain, and two or three Sicilians of his crew, were dragged along the benches bound with cords.

"Follow me—this way, signor—ere worse come of your remaining on deck?" said Gismondo, hurrying me into a cabin and shutting the sliding

door. "I will forget," he added, with an icy smile, "how coldly and cruelly you stood by while my—my daughter was murdered by that high-born ruffian, Bivona. May his race perish, or be followed by a curse to its latest generation!"

"Keenly at this moment do I feel the reproach—yet what could I do?"

"Had you not a sabre?" he asked, with fierce contempt. "Her death—it slaked not the thirsty vengeance of our accursed chiefs—they sent me to these galleys ——" he threw himself on a locker and covered his face with his hands.

How full of excitement and of agony was that time to me! Sad were the cries for pity, uttered to the pitiless—for mercy from those who had never received it, and knew it not—which mingled with the hideous uproar that reigned on the creaking deck above us. I heard plunge after plunge, as the corded victims were flung overboard by the desperate revolters; who, to refine upon cruelty, tied them back to back, and so hurled them into the seething waves, without the least chance of escape.

At last all was silent: the plunges were heard no more, and the last cry of despair had died away on the wind; I heard the heavy sweeps once more dipping in the water, and knew by the straining of the timbers and clatter of the thole-pins, that the *Seahorse* was under weigh again.

"I hope, major, your late companions do not mean to carry me off a prisoner!"

"No," he replied, gloomily; "and your life is safe. These unhappy men have no cause to be your enemies—you will be shortly sent ashore."

"But how were you all enabled to break loose, as if by magic?"

"The little hunchback, whom I verily believe to be satan, possessed strength sufficient to wrench his fetters in two; he then stole the master-key from the belt of the boatswain, as he slept beside the windlass: it was handed along the banks of oars—up the larboard and down the starboard benches—each slave in succession unlocking his manacles, until it came to me; when I opened the accursed padlock, and flung it, fetters, key and all, into the ocean."

"And these ruffians——"

"Will form no mean recruit to Francatripa, Benincasa, or some of those other robber chiefs who divide the hills and forests of Calabria among them."

At that moment we heard the splash of a quarter-boat, as it was hastily lowered down from the davits.

"Signor," said Gismondo, rising, "the boat awaits you; and the sooner we separate the better. A den such as this, crowded with these poor wretches, whom servile labour and the lash have degraded to the condition of brutes, cannot be

agreeable to one in the honourable station of a cavalier—a soldier—such as I once was in happier days. Adieu!" he pressed my hand, and led me to the side of the galley, where the boat was held close to the ladder by Fra Maso and three other slaves, who had chosen to land on that part of the coast.

"You accompany me, of course, Signor Major?" said I.

"Never! Broken in spirit—degraded as I am—this naked body—these scars: away, leave me to my misery! leave me! These poor men, at least, will not shrink from—adieu! Signor Dundas—adieu! Fra Maso—shove off!"

Before descending into the boat, I was compelled to deliver up my watch and purse: my sabretache was searched, but returned to me when found to contain only military letters and papers. I should probably have been deprived of my epaulettes, but as they were my fighting pair, they had become so tarnished by smoke and weather, that the searchers allowed them to pass unnoticed.

Gaspare Truffi had now succeeded poor little Guevarra in command of "His Majesty's Galley," as the reward of his strength and cunning. He was seated in Madonna's niche, on the poop, kicking his heels, swinging his long arms like the sails of a mill, shrieking, swearing, and drinking from a flask of lacrima, by turns. About twenty sweeps were manned; but the greater number of

slaves were busy, rummaging every lockfast place in search of plunder.

The night was black and stormy: not a star was visible, and the dark outline of the land rose up high and gloomily above us. We heard the boom of the white breakers, as they rolled on the rocky and silent shore; and their echoes mingled with the dash of the long sweeps, as the galley was pulled away and disappeared in the obscurity around us.

When again I met the Signor Gismondo, it was under very different circumstances: more fortunate than myself, he reached Crotona next day, and was protected by the Duke di Bagnara; who gave him a command in his battalion of the Free Calabri.

We were soon amidst the surf; and as the boat shipped sea after sea, we were quickly drenched to the skin. While I sat shivering in the stern sheets, the four rescued slaves pulled on in silence, and with all their strength; lifting the light shallop out of the water at every stroke, in their eagerness to tread on earth once more. How joyously and strongly they seemed to stretch their now unfettered limbs! Having the tiller ropes, I steered the boat towards a piece of sandy beach which we discerned through the gloom; and, not without fear of crashing on some concealed rock, I saw its head shoot into a narrow creek, between two jutting crags, against which the eastern current of the

Ionian sea was running in mountains of angry foam. In consequence of the boat's headway, the fury with which she was pulled, and the strength of the current, she was run up high and dry on the beach, with a concussion that nearly tossed us all out on the sand. The rowers leaped up with a triumphant shout of "Buon viaggio, Signor Inglese!" and springing away towards the hills, left me to my own reflections.

Behold me, then, in a most desolate condition: landed at midnight on the sea-shore, in a remote part of Calabria—the lawless land of robbery and outrage—then "the *terra incognita* of Europe"—minus my valise and purse, and without a guide. The rogues had stripped me of everything, save Bianca's dear little ring; the diamond of which my thick leathern glove had concealed from their prying eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THREE CANDLE-ENDS.

For some time I sat by the sea-shore, reflecting on what course to pursue; until the increased howling of the wind, the roar of the surf, and a drop or two of rain splashing on my face, announced that a rough morning was coming on. Not knowing whom I might encounter, I regretted the want of my pistols. Stumbling landward from the rocky beach, I succeeded in discovering a rude flight of steps, hewn in the basaltic rocks which faced the sea; but so obscure was all around, that on gaining the summit I knew not whether the dark chaotic masses before me were a bank of clouds or the termination of the long chain of the Apennines.

In a short time I perceived a light twinkling through the gloom, and could discern a little bay or harbour, where three small craft lay at anchor close under the lee of the high land. A narrow path brought me to a neat little cottage, over the low roof of which the vines clambered, mingling

with the orange trees, which raised their rich foliage and golden fruit above the sea-beat promontory. The wind was increasing, the clouds began to whirl and break, the rain to descend, and a single star, red, bright, and fiery, sparkling on the dark and distant horizon, was lost at times, as the billows of the Ionian main tumbled and rolled between it and me. Gladly I knocked at the cottage door; and after a long delay an aged domestic appeared at a loop or slit, through which the rays of her lamp shot forth, radiating into the gloom: she seemed unable to understand and unwilling to admit me.

"Open the door," said a man's voice, "should it be a robber, what have we to fear? I never harmed the brigands, and they dare not to meddle with me."

I expected, from this defying and confident tone, to behold some very ferocious personage when the door was opened; and was, therefore, agreeably surprised on being welcomed by a reverend old man, with silver hairs, and a most patriarchal beard flowing from a pleasing and benevolent countenance. It was my old friend the Basilian priest of Squillaci; and we immediately recognised each other. On my apologizing for disturbing him at an hour so unreasonable, he replied,——

"Say no more, signor; I am the priest of this district, and my door is open to all: from the great lord to the poor lazzarone, all are equally welcome

here. But thrice welcome the soldier; for, though now but a poor padre, I have borne arms in my youth, and fought in the wars of Charles of Parma; and I love the sight of a soldier for the sake of the thoughts of other years."

In the snug room of the Basilian, with my feet on the fire-pan of charcoal, I partook of a slight supper, and related the seizure of the galley and the destruction of her officers and crew: a tale which filled the gentle old Greek with horror. I then recurred to the urgent nature of my despatches, and the dilemma in which I found myself in consequence of being stripped of everything requisite to enable me to pursue my journey.

"Keep yourself easy, signor," said my host; "a little craft, bound northward, put into the harbour below, a few hours after sunset, to repair some damage sustained at sea; and I have no doubt her master will, at my request, be happy to land you at Crotona."

I was well pleased to hear this. After a little more conversation, the Basilian retired; and I slept till sunrise upon his sofa, with my cloak over me.

The skipper of whom he had spoken came to breakfast with us, and I discovered he had charge of the scampavia which had suffered from the *Sea-Horse's* forecastle-gun. Her starboard bulwark and part of her mainmast had been so much injured, that he had run into the little cove for

the double purpose of repairing the damage and waiting till the threatened squall blew past.

Maestro Maltei was, as his name imports, a thorough Maltese, quick-sighted, polite, and intelligent. His features displayed all the national peculiarities of his race; the black, shining Arabian eyes, thick lips, and swarthy visage. He was a stout man, upwards of thirty, and clad in a yellow cotton shirt, embroidered on the breast and sleeves; over it he wore an ample vest of red velvet, adorned with innumerable little silver buttons; a long silk scarf encircled his waist, and retained his sheathed knife; and on his head he wore a long tri-coloured woollen cap, which hung down his back below the waistband of his white cotton breeches. He had rings in his ears, and a rosary round his neck: altogether Maestro Maltei, though he had much of the pirate in his aspect, was, in reality, as smart a nautical dandy as one could see in these days lounging about the galley-arches at Malta.

After breakfast, he returned on board, promising to send for me when ready to put to sea. Anxious to proceed, I watched from the windows of the priest's house the operations of the carpenter busy at work; though the weather was lowering, and torrents of rain fell at intervals during the day, which dragged on slowly. I soon became heartily tired of the Basilian; who bored me, for six consecutive hours, with an essay he was

writing on the lives of two eminent ancients: Quintius Ennius, a Calabrian, the friend of Scipio and Lælius, author of eighteen books of metrical annals, and tragedies, epigrams, and satires innumerable; and Aurelius Cassiodorus, a Roman patrician and minister of Theodric, who founded a great monastery near Squillaci, where he wrote a history of the Goths.

Politeness compelled me to endure complacently the learned pedantry of the reverend father, to whose hospitality I was so much indebted; but I rejoiced when the bare-legged mate of the *Santelmo* approached with the information that she was ready to put to sea. Immediately after dinner I went on board, with my ears ringing with the Grecian's sonorous voice, and the epigrams, satires, and witty sayings of the immortal Quintius: whom I had never heard of before, and have seldom heard of since.

The weather, which had been alternately cloudy and sunny, now settled down into a dull grey evening: the whole sky became canopied by dusky vapour, which towards sunset was streaked with a pale stormy yellow; the saffron sun was seen for a few minutes, as it sank behind the hills of Oppido; and, as the light died away, the sea turned gloomy and black. The wind blew in gusts, and the billows rolled on the beach with a hollow sound: everything betokened a rough night; but the Maltese were ready for sea, and the

warps were cast off. I had some misgivings about sailing in such weather, but concealed my anxiety. The other two craft, a xebecque and a sloop, remained at anchor; and their crews showed no sign of preparing for sea. I spoke of this to Maestro Maltei, and asked if he thought they expected rough weather.

"Probably they do, signor," said he, removing his cigar, as we walked to and fro on the weather side of the quarter-deck; while the fleet schooner flew onward, straining under her bellying canvass. "The masters are timid Venetians, and the sailors tremble for their share of the cargo."

"Then stormy weather *is* expected?"

"Doubtless we shall have a dirty night: but, having repaired all the damage done by that cursed shot, and, moreover, having received from my very good friend, the Basilian father, three sacred wax candles, which have burned before the shrine of Our Lady of Bova, after being duly blessed and sanctified by the Bishop of Cosenza ——"

"And with these ——"

"We light our binnacle, and no danger can overwhelm us."

"On the faith of these you put to sea on a stormy night!—three old candle-ends ——"

"Undoubtedly, signor," said he, turning away abruptly, while I was equally annoyed by his folly and ignorance.

The *Santelmo*, as she was named, was a smart little schooner, with a lofty tapering mainmast; she was broad in the beam, but sharp at the bows, where an image of her saintly patron spread his arms above the deep. Her well-scrubbed decks were flush and white; while the brass plates on her four carronades, her binnacle-lamps, and the copper on her sides, were all polished and shone like burnished gold. She was gaudily painted, and straight as a lance from stem to stern. With all her snowy canvass set, we ran along the coast, favoured by the land-breeze, and soon saw the lights of Gierazzo and the Locrian temples of Palepoli vanish behind us in the dusk. Upon a wind the *Santelmo* sailed admirably, and midnight saw us far beyond the Capo Stilo; but the breeze had increased so much that, notwithstanding his intense faith in the candle-ends, Maltei was obliged to take in sail. Still more tough grew the gale; the night became darker: the high outline of the Calabrian hills could be discerned no more, and the breaking sea was covered with white foam. The miraculous candles had been lighted in the binnacle with great formality, by the cabin-boy on his bare knees; imploring, at the same time, in the names of St. Elmo and St John of Malta, a peaceful night for the master and crew.

The blessed candles burned and sputtered merrily; the bushy-whiskered and grim-visaged timo-

niere hitched up his cotton breeches, twitched down the net which confined his long black hair, and grasped the helm in confident silence. But harder blew the wind: it roared through the rigging, and the *Santelmo* was soon flying through the rolling sea, stripped of half her canvass.

The mate slung himself from the spritsail yard; and, when endeavouring to place a candle in the hand of the image on the cutwater, dropped overboard, and (poor fellow!) was seen no more. The sailors now became excited.

"Clew up the fore-topsail—in with the fore-staysail! Saints and devils! be quick, will you!" yelled Maltei, through his speaking-trumpet. "Close reef the foresail, and take in everything else fore and aft. Per Baccho!—Our blessed Lady!—Devil in hell! Look sharp, will ye!—Quick, there, or I will shoot the last man off the deck. Away, aloft, while ye can get out on the yard!" But not a man would venture, and Maltei might as well have roared to the wind.

"Corpo! you blundering asses, let all go by the sheets, then. Apostles and angels! Quick, cowards!—let fly, or the masts will go by the board."

The order was obeyed: the cordage rattled, the blocks shrieked; the canvass flew to leeward, split to ribbons, which crackled and lashed the rigging, as they flapped on the furious wind: but we escaped a capsize, and the schooner skimmed along under her close-reefed foresail; while Maltei

took the tiller and strove to keep her to her course, swearing and praying by turns.

The loss of the mate and the increasing tempest rendered all gloomy and discontented. Anon, there was a cry. I instinctively grasped the bulwarks. A tremendous sea was shipped; it swept over the whole deck, washing three sailors, the long boat, all the spare booms and spars, overboard: also the binnacle, with the compass and—horror of horrors!—the three miraculous candles; which were extinguished in an instant.

A howl of dismay burst from the Maltese, who from that time seemed to abandon all hope and exertion. For a moment the schooner staggered and stood still: had such another sea burst over her she must have foundered; but saved by her buoyancy, as the water ran off her deck, she again plunged forward on her perilous path. A groan burst from Maltei on beholding the candles washed overboard: he quitted the helm and abandoned the schooner to her fate.

"Signor Maltei—Padrone di Vascello—madman and blockhead!" I exclaimed, rushing towards the tiller, which snapped its ropes and was dashed to pieces in an instant. The *Santelmo* fell away round, and yawing from side to side, flew at a fearful rate before the wind. There was a crash! the foremast went by the board, bringing the maintopmast down with it; the wreck fell to leeward, and was swept away astern; while the vessel lay a

helpless log upon the sea, tossing about like a cork, and exposed continually to the waves, which hurried on in successive mountains as if to overwhelm the shattered ship, rolling with fury over the deck, and burying her far into the deep dark trough of the midnight sea. A torrent of water pouring down the companion-hatch filled the cabin; others succeeded: the vessel became water-logged, and the wood lumber in her hold alone prevented her from sinking.

"Holy Saint Elmo! blessed Madonna! and O Thou, who walked on the waters—who said to the storm 'Be still,' and it was still—look upon us!" cried the survivors of the crew.

"Master Maltei," said I, bitterly, "you have thrown away your vessel, and the lives of all on board, by your despicable ignorance and want of seamanship. Your crew are cowards, and unworthy to sail under a British flag!" He made no reply; but, sunk in gloomy apathy, remained lashed to the capstan, while I secured myself similarly to the windlass: from stem to stern the bulwarks were totally gone, save a fragment which afforded me shelter at the bow.

When the storm lulled a little, I prevailed on the sailors to rig a sail forward with some canvass and two spare spars brought up from below; and a jury foremast was soon set up, with a dexterity which showed what the men were capable of if properly directed. Now, once more before the

fierce hurricane, the sharp schooner drove on with the speed of a galloping horse: but whether running in full career against the rocks of Stilo, or away into the Ionian sea, we had not the least idea. The seven survivors began to work at the pumps, and we all took heart anew as daylight slowly approached, and the long night, with its excitement and horror, passed away.

It came, the sunless morning—a grey sky, a black sea—a cold gloom everywhere. Afar off we discerned land on the larboard-bow: but there was not a sail in sight, save a ship which rode securely under the coast with her top-gallant-masts struck. I had no doubt it was the *Amphion* anchored off Cape della Colonna, the promontory so close to the place of my destination.

We were drenched to the skin, and had been so all night: we were without food, yet continued to toil at the pumps; which soon, to our great dismay, brought up clear water. The sea having torn away stern-post and rudder, the pumps were our only chance of safety; and the Maltese, encouraged by my example (more than that of their skipper), worked until they were sinking with fatigue. On, on we flew before the sweeping wind, and soon lost sight of

"Fair Lacinia, graced with Juno's fane."

Once more the mountains sank beneath the horizon; and soon nothing but sea and sky were around us, as we flew before the blast into the Gulf

of Tarentum, where we were at the mercy of the wind and tide during the whole of that miserable day. The sailors became dejected: three quitted the pumps and betook themselves to prayer, and the leaks gained on us. Four men still continued to toil, exposed to every wave that washed over the defenceless deck, which was then almost level with the ocean; and the planking was so slippery that we were in continual danger of being carried away to leeward.

"The sunless day went down;" night began to darken sea and sky, and we contemplated its approach with gloomy forebodings and absolute horror. The *Santelmo* now made less way, in consequence of the thoroughly wetted state of her cargo, which buried her to the chain-plates in the water, where she lurched and pitched heavily. When it was dark, the gale increased; not a star was visible, and the dense gloom thickened in every direction around us.

By breaking through a bulk-head, the carpenter contrived to get up a keg of brandy from the fore-hold, and with a reckless shout the sailors crowded around him. They drank copiously, and the liquor rendered them mad: they yelled and screamed, shaking their clenched hands at the storm in defiance, reviling the Basilian and his candles, and cursing St. Elmo; whose head the carpenter clove with his hatchet.

In the midst of this ghastly merriment, while

they were dancing furiously, hand in hand, over the slippery deck, a tremendous sea took us right amidship. I saw it coming on, dark, heaving, and terrible—a roaring mountain of liquid blackness—and embraced the windlass with all the strength with which despair and love of life endued me. In irresistible fury, the stupendous wave rolled its mighty volume over the wreck: when it passed away I was *alone*. It had swept, into the boiling sea, every one of them. A cry came feebly on the bellowing wind, and all was over: I heard only the hiss of the dashing spray, and the plunging of the wreck, as alternately it rose on the crest of a wave, and thundered down into the yawning ocean. I had bound myself securely to the windlass with my sash, and my principal fear was that the water-logged hull might sink; for in such a sea, and when so far from land, swimming would be unavailing.

O, the multiplied horrors of that dismal night! How gladly, amid that intense ocean solitude, I would have hailed the sound of a human voice—a glimpse of the distant shore—a gleam from a lonely star. Strange visions of home and happiness—of sunny fields and green moving woods—floated before me. Then came other scenes and sounds: the boom of cannon and the roll of the drums. Now I was leading on my stormers at Scylla; anon I was with Bianca—I heard her soft low voice, her sweet Italian tone, and her gentle hand clasped mine— * * * *

CHAPTER XIX.

WHO IS HE?

FROM a state of dreamy apathy—a delirium between sleeping and waking: the very fever of desperation—the increased roar of ocean aroused me. Through the sullen gloom I discerned, a-head, a mighty barrier of rocks, against which the sea was running with incredible fury, casting the foam of its breakers to the clouds, and hurrying the wreck onwards to total destruction. I heard my heart beat: the critical moment was come, for safety or destruction. I drew off my boots, buttoned up the despatches in the breast of my coat, and casting another glance at that frowning, sable, and appalling barrier of rock, felt my heart sink within me: yet that heart had never quailed in the breach, or on the battle-field.

An exclamation of sincere piety escaped my lips, and suppliantly my hands were raised to Heaven. Next moment there was a frightful crash! the parting wreck sank beneath me, the

deck split under my feet, and I was struggling breathlessly in the dark water amid the dashing breakers; which were covered with froth and foam, and fragments of spare masts, yards, ribs, cargo, planks, &c.: from these I received more than one severe blow; while blinded with spray, sick at heart, and trembling in every nerve, I swam towards this black and terrible shore. Thrice my hand touched the slippery rocks, and thrice the greedy waves sucked me back into their whirling vortex: but one flung me headlong forward on a ledge, and I grasped, convulsively, the strong tough sea-weed which grew on its beetling face.

Fervently thanking Heaven for my escape, I clambered up the slippery cliffs beyond the reach of the breakers; whose bitter and heavy spray beat over me incessantly. After stopping for a few minutes to recover breath and recall my scattered energies, I ascended to the summit: the level country spread before me, and a few lights sparkling at a distance, announced a neighbouring town. A distant bell tolled the eleventh hour as I walked forward along a road bordered by trees: but my knees bent tremulously at every step; for I felt still the roll of the ship and the dull boom of the ocean, and the hiss of its salt frothy breakers yet rang in my ears.

As if its object had been accomplished in the destruction of the little schooner, the storm,

which had raged so long, now began to die away: the trees became less agitated; the veil of dark clouds, which had obscured the face of heaven, withdrew; and the silver stars were seen sparkling in the blue dome above.

Though rejoicing in my safety, and pitying the poor fellows who had perished, I moved on in dread and doubt, shivering with cold and misery. My uniform was drenched with salt water, and stuck close to me, and my head and feet were without covering. I longed to learn whether Fate had thrown me on the Calabrian shore, or on that of Otranto: if on the latter, I felt certain of becoming a prisoner to the French; whose commanders often displayed, at that time, more of the savage spirit of the Revolutionists, than of that chivalry which distinguished the brave soldiers of the empire. When I thought on the many years of captivity which might elapse ere I again beheld Bianca or my home, I almost regretted that the ocean had not swallowed me up; immediate death appearing preferable to the sickening future I anticipated: hope deferred for years, promotion stopped, and prospects blighted, perhaps, for ever.

As I walked slowly forward, my feet were soon cut by the hard flinty road; which I pursued towards the town. But the appearance of a handsome little villa, in the centre of a lawn, standing by the wayside, changed my intentions: I did

not hesitate to approach the house; deeming it safer to acquaint an Italian gentleman with my condition, than to proceed, with the chance of being captured by the quarter-guard of a French camp or cantonment.

Passing through an ornamental wicket, I approached the villa, which was surrounded by a paved terrace, enclosed by a stone balustrade: every window was dark, save one on the ground floor, which appeared made to open like a folding door. In front of this a flight of marble steps descended from the terrace, between two pedestals, on each of which reposed a sculptured lion. I stood before the window, between the crimson curtains of which the interior was revealed; and its decorations and furniture were more splendid than the general aspect of the villa led me to expect.

An aged man, of a venerable, benign, and truly noble aspect, sat near an ebony table, on which he leant, intently reading by the light proceeding from the globe of a silver lamp. He wore a baretta of crimson velvet, adorned in front with a gold cross, and a cape and stockings of scarlet peeped out from under an ample dressing-gown of faded brocade, which enveloped his person. A few thin silvery hairs escaped from beneath his cap, and they glittered in the lamplight; his forehead was high and commanding, the curve of his lip was majestic, and there was an

indescribable dignity in his whole aspect. His cheek and brow were pale; yet, at times, his eyes sparkled as brightly as those of an Italian girl, as he conned over an old and discoloured piece of parchment, to which various seals and coloured ribbons were attached.

I know not what it was that agitated me at that moment, but there was something in the presence of that venerable stranger which, as it were, drew me insensibly towards him; and all dread of acquainting him with my situation, and entrusting him with my liberty and safety, vanished. Once more, ere essaying, I looked steadily at him. He was replacing the charter in an iron safe, and had drawn forth another, to which a seal, like a pancake, was appended. The light flashed more fully on his features than it had done before; and, strange to say, they appeared to me like those of an old friend, or of one whom I had a dim recollection of having seen before: but *where*, I endeavoured in vain to recollect.

"O, my illustrious brother!" he exclaimed, "though thy gallant heart is mouldering at Frescati, thy memory will be cherished while chivalry and valour are respected among men!" He paused, and lay back in an arm-chair, when I could perceive that tears were running down his cheeks; but the deep emotion passed away, and he again resumed his reading. I then tapped

gently on the casement, and lifting the latch entered the apartment.

"Pardon this intrusion—be not alarmed, reverend signor."

He started; the paper fell from his hand; he closed the safe with precipitation, and grasping the gilded knobs of his arm-chair, stared at me in astonishment. Certainly my appearance was not very prepossessing: my old fighting coat, which had long since acquired a purple hue by campaigning and the blood of wounds, had become of a most unique colour, by being drenched in salt water. I was unshaven, grisly, and gaunt of visage; minus boots and hat, and my damp hair hung around my face in matted locks.

"A British officer in my presence, and at this time of night!" he exclaimed. "Whence come you, sir?" he added, surveying me with a proud stern glance, which gradually melted into one more pleasant and benign. "Your name and purpose, signor?"

"Claude Dundas, a captain of the 62nd regiment, and aide-de-camp to General Sir John Stuart, now serving in the Calabrias."

"Stuart—*Stuart!*" he muttered, "the times are indeed changed when—you say your name is Dundas? Which family are you of?"

Though surprised at this question from an Italian lord, I satisfied him; he smiled, and said, "*I* know them."

"Illustrissimo, I have undergone great misery during the past storm in the Gulf of Tarento, and in this condition have been wrecked: I know not upon what part of the Italian shores I have been thrown, but trust to be received with that hospitality which I, as an officer of Italy's ally, have a right to expect."

"Welcome, signor: but excuse my rising. *I* never rise but to equals. No Briton in distress ever sought succour from me in vain; yet little—little, truly, do these heretical islanders deserve favour at my hands! Ola, Catanio!"

He rang a silver hand-bell, and an attendant, or old priest, made his appearance; who exhibited the same aspect of dismay that his master had done on beholding me.

"With us, signor," said my host, "you are safe, although Massena's soldiers swarm everywhere around us. Here you can remain in disguise until we discover some means of sending you to Calabria."

"You speak my very wishes—I am deeply indebted to you! Upon what part of the coast have I been thrown?"

"Near Canne, in Basilicata, a few miles from the frontier of Upper Calabria."

"I am then in rear of the French lines at Cassano!" said I, aghast at the intelligence. He bowed.

"Follow Catanio; change your attire, and par-

take of some refreshment—go! afterwards I will speak with you." He had all the air and tone of a man who through life had been accustomed to wield authority.

"Basilicata!" I repeated inwardly, as we retired: it seemed almost incredible that the water-logged wreck, under a jury-foresail, even when aided by wind and tide, could have run so far up the gulf since daybreak. Her sailing must have averaged five knots an hour, since we lost sight of the Capo della Colonna. Catanio, who by his taciturnity and outward trim appeared to be a monk, led me into an ante-room, where he furnished me with dry apparel. I asked him numerous questions concerning my host, but he seemed very unwilling to gratify my curiosity.

"Signor Catanio," said I, while slipping on a pair of black cotton breeches; "I presume he is a man of rank."

"In Italy none is nobler; the vicegerent of God excepted," he replied, energetically.

"You are an Abbruzzese by your accent, I think?" The old fellow smiled sourly, and took a great pinch of snuff.

"I am an honest man," said he, handing his snuff-box to me, and bundling my wet uniform, somewhat contemptuously, into a chest, which he locked.

"And my host," I continued, thrusting on a

black serge jacket; "he must be a churchman, as he is served by priests: how am I to address him?"

"Italians style him, 'his eminence;' but we, his faithful domestics and followers, ——"

"Eminence!—is he Cardinal Ruffo?"

"Ruffo, the apostate!" repeated the other, with such intense scorn, that I was undeceived.

"He is a cardinal at all events; and I (unhappy pagan!) have been styling him plain signor. Excuse my laughing; but, faith! one feels so comfortable in these dry clothes, after the misery of —but what is this? I am not going to a masquerade!"

"It is our master's pleasure that you attire yourself thus," said Catanio, handing me a cassock and three flapped-hat like his own; "it is your only safe disguise."

"It is just like a snug dressing-gown after all," said I, donning the garment.

"You are a perfect monk, signor!" said the old man, smiling kindly; "but do not keep your head so erect: that is an old habit. Ah! there was a time—but here are your beads—tie the girdle thus. Bravo! you are a very monk."

"Snuff, grease, garlic, &c. excepted," I thought.

"I am happy to assist in saving a countryman from those false Frenchmen."

"A countryman—what! are you a Scotchman?"

"Born and bred, sir," said he, laying aside his Italian, and with an effort recalling the strong

northern dialect of his boyhood. "I was called Duncan Catanach, and in happier days dwelt near Lochaber, in old Caledonia; which I would fain behold once more before I die."

The eyes of the old man glistened, and we shook hands with all the brotherly warmth of heart with which Scot greets Scot in a foreign land.

"I rejoice to meet in this place a subject of old George III."

"I am no subject of his! the petty princes—"

"Ha! some follower of Watt, who was beheaded for treason—eh?"

"No!" he replied, proudly and sternly; "I follow no traitor—nor do I participate in treason!" At that moment his master's bell rang loudly, and he hurriedly withdrew.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CARDINAL.

In a few minutes he led me back to the presence of my host. A slight repast had been hastily laid for me in a snug little library, the walls of which were adorned with a few trophies of arms and portraits, some of them veiled by crimson curtains; but I was too much interested in the cold fowls, the sparkling wine, and other viands displayed on the snowy table-cloth, to bestow a thought upon anything else. On entering, I bowed profoundly to his eminence, who occupied a large gilt chair, cushioned with crimson velvet. Catanio seated himself at the table to help me.

"Make yourself quite at home, signor," said my host, "and sup without ceremony; being lashed to a wreck for ten hours is enough to give any man an appetite: but excuse my not bearing you company. I have already supped, the hour is late, and I do not usually admit strangers to my table. Catanio, be attentive to our friend."

Catanach—or Catanio—filled my glass with glowing sherry; and long ere the speech of my host was finished, I had dissected the major part of an excellent fowl. My eye fell upon my figure reflected in a mirror opposite, and I could scarcely restrain my mirth: I was a perfect canon, save that a head of curly brown hair supplied the place of a shaven scalp.

"Truly, signor, you make an excellent friar," said the cardinal, who seemed to know what was passing in my mind; "and I doubt not that were you to resign the sword and belt for the cross and cord, you might rise in our catholic church, as many of your countrymen from Douay have done. You must be aware," he continued, after a pause, "that while here, in rear of Massena and Regnier's lines, you run considerable risk of discovery, with the danger of suspicion as a spy. But the ruthless marshal never disturbs my household; and while with it you are safe. He regards me with respect; although his master's iron hand robbed me of the little that war, rebellion, and crime had left me: the poor remnant of the fairest patrimony in Europe."

"I am indebted to your eminence: it would be a deathblow to my hopes to be taken prisoner just now, and would quite play the devil with me!"

"A British frigate often comes up the gulf as far as Canne."

"Ah! the *Amphion*."

"I will send you off to her by a boat: to pass the French picquets at Cassano is too dangerous a mode of escape. I wish to befriend you, signor; and would deplore—ah! I love the scarlet coat: for I, too, have worn it in my youth."

"A cardinal in a red coat! In our service, my lord?"

"No," he replied coldly, while his eyes sparkled and his cheek flushed. "No: but when I commanded fifteen thousand French infantry at Dunkirk, in the service of my father, whose portrait is behind you."

From the incomprehensible speaker, I turned to the portrait, which was that of a dark and oval-featured cavalier, in a long wig, which flowed over his steel breastplate and scarlet coat; his eyes possessed the same keen and proud expression which I beheld in those of the Italian.

"I presume, my lord, you have seen service?"

"None worth mentioning," he replied; and, after pausing a while, till Catanio had retired and the table was cleared, he thus continued:—"And you are a Scotsman? How I love to meet with one! Ah! capitano, the Scots were a loyal people once; but how changed since their rampant Presbyterian priesthood have moulded the nation to their purpose—the designing heretics! Oh, cunning clodpoles! I may live to mar you yet."

"You, eminenza?"

"I," he replied, his eyes sparkling again.

"You have been in Scotland, I presume?" I asked, with an air of pique.

"Never: but the name of that country finds an echo in my heart. Though born a Roman, the ideas of your people, their Lowland nobles and the chiefs of the loyal and illustrious clans, are all well known to me. Dear to me, indeed, is every inch of the isle of Great Britain: though truly I owe little to the land which set a price on the heads of my nearest and dearest relatives."

"Whom have I the honour of addressing?"

"*Your king!*" he replied, with a deep voice, which caused me to start, as he rose erect from his chair, and his tall and venerable figure seemed to dilate, and his faded cheek to glow. "Your king, sir," he added, in pure English: "one, at least, who should have been so; but the hands of time and fate are now laid heavily upon him. I am Henry the Second of Scotland and the Ninth of the sister kingdom—the Cardinal Duke of York: now, alas! known as the last of the House of Stuart. Fate—fate—yes, hardly hast thou dealt with me! Expelled from Rome by Napoleon, robbed of my estates, and driven to penury in my old age, I dwell here in forgotten obscurity, subsisting on that poor pittance which is yearly doled out by the Government of Britain. Yet let me not be ungrateful to George their king: even that he might have withheld from me. A time

may come—God hath given, and God can take away. You know me now, sir: let your wonder cease."

As if exhausted by this outburst of his troubled spirit, the venerable cardinal sank back in his chair, while I arose from mine in a very unpleasant state of astonishment, pleasure, and doubt: astonishment at the discovery, a joyous pleasure at beholding the aged and illustrious prelate (even then the secret idol of many a heart which clung to memories of the past), and doubt how to address him; having heard that he exacted the title of "Majesty," which it was as much as my commission was worth to yield him. But a spell was upon me. I had looked on kings at the head of armies, surrounded by their staff and courtiers; and, though banners were lowered and cannon thundered in salute, to me they were just as other men: but in the air and aspect of the aged Henry Stuart, even in that humble apartment, and surrounded by no external grandeur save that with which the mind invested him—with no insignia of royalty save those with which inborn grace and majesty arrayed him—there was a nameless charm, a potent and mysterious influence which quite bewildered me; and all the romance, the misfortune, the ten thousand stirring memories of the past—so stirring, at least, to every thorough Scotsman—rushed upon my mind like a torrent. It was a sensation of happiness, a gush of chivalric

sentiment and honest veneration which accompanied them. I bowed, with proper humility, before the old cardinal-duke; whose proud dark eyes sparkled again, as he extended his hands above my head, and, forgetting his imaginary majesty in the churchman, bestowed on me a solemn Latin benediction.

"Wear this in memory of me." He threw around my neck a ribbon to which a gold medal was attached; and, when the tumult of my spirits passed away, and I raised my head, he was gone. Catanio stood beside me.

"Has he not the air of a king?" he asked, while a bitter smile curled his thin lips, and lit up his sharp gray eye. "You are afraid to answer. You are wearied, perhaps. His Majesty has retired for the night: allow me to lead you to your apartment."

In the solitude of my chamber, I endeavoured to unravel the chaos of thought that whirled through my brain. The driving wreck, the drowning crew, and the terrors of the midnight storm—the white salt foam, the roaring sea, the cliffs up which I clambered—the villa, the cardinal-duke blessing me: all passed before me in rapid review. I drew forth the ribbon and medal to examine them: the latter was of massive gold; it was one of those struck by order of the cardinal on the death of his brother, Prince Charles, and distributed among his friends (who even then, as his papers

afterwards revealed, were both powerful and numerous), in commemoration of his imaginary succession. It bore his head in bold relief, with the motto—"Henricus Nonus, Anglia Rex." On the reverse was a cross, supported by Britannia and the Virgin; behind rose a bridge and cathedral, with the crown of Britain. George III. became possessed of two of those singular medals; but perhaps I was the first of his officers who received one from the hand of York: I have preserved the gift, with proper reverence, in memory of an interview which I shall never forget.

Next morning, I was awakened by the familiar but unwelcome sound of drums beating. Dressing in my strange garb, and descending to the lawn which lay around the mansion, I walked forth to enjoy a ramble in solitude. I looked on my shovel-hat, the serge sleeves and knotted girdle of my strange attire. Three days ago, I was aide-de-camp to the Count of Maida, galloping along the line on a garrison parade; to-day, a monk, and a follower of Henry Stuart, the Cardinal-Duke of York!

The beauty of the scenery and freshness of the morning drew my steps towards Canne, which I beheld on the sea-shore, about two miles distant; its white walls, church spire, and casements, gleaming in the rising sun. The sound of distant bells reminded me that it was Sunday. The morning was cloudless, the sky blue, the earth

green and glistening with dew; the wide gulf of Tarento sparkled with light as it vanished into dimness and misty obscurity; the horizontal line where sea met sky, being only marked by some sail glittering, like a snow-wreath or white cloud, in the distance. The road was narrow, and, being bordered by thick copsewood, was cool and shady. I wandered on until a turn unexpectedly brought me upon the parade of a regiment of French infantry, which had just been inspected by Massena, and was being formed into sections preparatory to marching. My heart beat quick: discovery was death, and I shrank from the lynx-like gaze of the ferocious Massena; who, after a few words with the colonel, galloped off accompanied by his aide. I began to breathe a little more freely. I recognised the 12th Grenadiers in their blue greatcoats and bear-skin caps; and at their head my old friend De Bourmont, as paunchy and merry as ever. An exchange of prisoners had taken place, and all that we had captured were once more in arms against us. The band struck up, the arms flashed as they were sloped in the sun, and the battalion moved off, *en route* for the frontiers of Calabria; where Massena was concentrating his forces at the very time our troops were about to abandon the country. How bravely the sharp trumpet and the hoarse drums rang in the wooded way, as they marched through the green defiles! Whilst I listened, regardless of time and

place, cassock and cope, some peasant women approached that I might bestow a benison on their children; they, however, received only very vague and curious answers as I pushed past and hurried back towards the good cardinal's villa, from which I had been too long absent.

After I had breakfasted hastily in my own apartment, Catanio informed me that as his majesty was to celebrate high mass at Canne, as a piece of etiquette it would be necessary for me to attend.

"Faith! I have entertained the natives enough for one day," said I. Catanio frowned; and being obliged to consent, a mule was brought me, and I set off with the household of the cardinal. A lumbering, old-fashioned coach bore his eminence from the villa, at a most solemn pace; its little Roman horses appearing dwarfed to the size of ponies beside the ancient vehicle, on whose carved and gilded pannels shone the crown and arms of Britain. The old man considered himself in everything a king; and doubtless an excellent one he would have made, if we judge by the goodness of his heart, and the fidelity of his few and disinterested adherents.

That magic influence by which his family always gained the unbounded loyalty and most romantic attachment of their followers, he certainly possessed in no small degree: there was a nobility of soul, a quiet stateliness of demeanor, and a

pious resignation to his obscure fate, which made his imaginary crown shine with greater lustre; and he passed through life more peacefully and happily, in consequence of taking no active part in the great question of hereditary right, which had embittered the days of his father and brother. His years, his rank, his reputed sanctity, and general amiability of character procured him the admiration and devotion of the Italians; who were exasperated by the invasion of Rome, and the expulsion of so many ecclesiastics of rank. The crowd surrounding the porch of the church uncovered, with reverence, as he descended from the coach, and, followed by his household, three old Scottish priests, an Irish valet, and myself, ascended the steps of the church. On these crowded a number of wretched mendicants, — a hideous mass of festering sores, ragged garments, black visages, and squalid misery; they fell upon their knees, and when Catanio scattered some silver among them, there arose cries of—

"Viva eminenza! O, the gracious lord! the beneficent father! Viva Enrico Stuardo! Viva la famiglia Stuardi!"

High mass in its most impressive form was celebrated by the cardinal. The congregation consisted of the people of Canne, a few ladies, fewer cavaliers, and a sprinkling of the French garrison. Though the church was not large, its ancient aisles and carved roof presented a noble

specimen of the old Italian gothic, exhibiting those striking extremes of light and shadow for which that style is remarkable. The strong blaze of the noon-day sun poured between the many mullions of its stained windows, slanting on the picturesque crowd who stood or knelt around the columns; on the cavalier in his ample cloak, the signora in her veil and mantle, the peasant in his rough jacket, and the graceful country girl with her sparkling eyes and olive cheek, shaded by a modest muslin panno. Six tall candles glimmered before the dark altar-piece, while the altar itself, being covered with the richest carving and gilding, shone like a blaze of glory around the aged cardinal, who stood on the highest step.

The relics of several saints and martyrs, of great reputed sanctity, stood upon it; and an old ragged mantle, which hung from one of the columns, was said to be the cloak of Madonna, and to have cured divers disorders by being wrapped round the sufferers.

My informant was a priest: while speaking he glanced at Bianca's diamond ring which sparkled on my finger; and the scrutinizing eye with which he regarded me brought the blood to my temples. I was also exposed to the watchful glances of a French officer; in whom, to my horror, I recognised General Compere, whom I had met at Maida: some recollections of my face appeared to flash across his mind, and he

stared at me with cool determination. Uneasy at the chance, the danger, and disgrace of discovery, I withdrew, by a side door, into a little oratory which adjoined the body of the church.

"Reverend father," said a man advancing with a bunch of keys, "are you the Frà Sermonello, whom his eminence has deputed to visit the chapel of the penitents?"

"To be sure, fool! for what should I be here else?" I answered, gruffly, forgetting my assumed character in the annoyance I felt; but immediately adding, "of course, my son, I am come to visit these unfortunate devils—heretics, I mean."

"This way, then, Signor Canonico," said he, with an air which showed he had no great veneration for my sanctity.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST PENITENT—THE NUN.

"A CURSED scrape!" thought I, whilst following him through a little side-door of iron, which creaked on its rusty hinges as it rolled slowly back, revealing a long passage, dark and mysterious as any in the pages of 'Anne Radcliffe,' and interrupted by flights of steps; where we required a lamp to aid us in descending. The black walls were covered with glistening slime, and reflected the flashes of the lamp, which flickered and almost expired as it struggled with the noxious vapours floating through these dismal vaults; and I became chilled with cold as we descended. An iron grate or portcullis, which barred our way, was raised up in a sliding groove by my guide; who requested me to pass, and, saying he would await me there, gave me his lamp.

Many tales of the holy office, and of the bigoted ferocity of Italian monks, flashed on my remembrance. Perhaps I was in a snare!

Doubtful whether to proceed, or knock the fellow down and regain the church, even at the risk of being discovered by General Compere, I stood for a moment irresolute: but I had no secret enemy there, and the cardinal was a powerful friend.

"Father," said my guide, "you are a stranger here?"

"I am in these vaults for the first time."

"They contain three penitents: first, a nun, who broke her vows, and lies sneezing and coughing in the cell just before you. Poor girl! she has been here three weeks, and likes her quarters no better than the first hour she saw them: maladetto! you may hear how she moans. Opposite lies the cell of a mad cavalier, who is chained like a tiger—my lord bishop intends confining him here for life; and next his cell is that of a monk, sent hither for living too joyous a life—gaming and drinking with gay damsels, when he should have been snug in his dormitory."

"I have a project," said I; "leave me the keys. On my return, I will deposit them in the niche at the chapel door."

"That was old Fra Grasso's way," replied the keeper or warder; and, doffing his hat, withdrew.

"Now, were there a thousand prisoners here, I should set every one of them free!" I exclaimed, while hurrying along the passage, lamp in hand; execrating the cruelty of that tyrannical prelate,

who confined three human beings in a place which I could not contemplate without a shudder. The low, narrow passage was arched by rough stone groins, springing from corbelled heads, hideous as those of demons, that projected from walls, through the joints of which the damp reeking slime had been distilling for ages: innumerable stalactites hung long and pendent like foul icicles; enormous fungi flourished luxuriantly on the sable masonry; large bloated toads croaked on the slippery floors; rats peeped forth from holes and corners, and the whistling bat flitted to and fro on the cold vapours of those dripping dungeons.

Before me lay the cell of the nun: intending to visit her first, I unlocked with great difficulty the oaken door, and entered. Accustomed to the gloom, I could survey the whole place at a glance; it was a dark, cold, and comfortless den, about sixteen feet square, and had a narrow zigzag loop-hole opening high in the wall, which admitted little air and less light. Crouching upon a bundle of straw, in a corner of that detestable place, lay the poor nun; wasted and worn, pale and ghastly. Her eyes were raised to Heaven; and though her lips moved not, she was praying, but in that still voice which God alone can hear. At the sound of my steps, she turned on me an apathetic stare, and her sunken eyes sparkled wildly between the long dishevelled masses of her raven

hair, which wandered over her bare bosom and shoulders. She was almost destitute of covering; having, I believe, no other garment than a gown of black serge, which was torn in many places, revealing her pure white skin, that gleamed like alabaster through the gloom.

"Oh, pity, pity! for the gentle love of God!" she exclaimed; and added, with a shriek, "Ah! it is the bishop—again—again!"

Shuddering, she hid her face in her long hair, and began to weep as if her heart would burst. Approaching her, I laid my hand kindly on her soft shoulder, and said—

"Poor woman! be comforted; you are not entirely forsaken——"

"Begone!" she exclaimed, spitting upon me; "away, priests of hell, who murdered my love—my husband! Away, lest I tear you with my teeth! Ha! ha! madness is coming fast upon me! Oh, joy, Jesu Christo! my brain begins to wander."

"Signora——"

"Preach on—of what? religion—and in this dungeon!—in which religion has consigned me to darkness, solitude, and horror. Oh! the soul-sinking misery I have endured these many, many weeks! My husband—who murdered him before my face?—A priest. Who would have dishonoured me?—A priest! Ha, away to your tyrant bishop! I will commune with God without the medium of wretches such as thee!"

"Lady, I am no priest," I replied, deeply touched by her misery and piercing voice. "I am a soldier—a gentiluomo in disguise. Trust me, and you may yet escape to be free and happy."

As I spoke, she rose from the floor, grasped my arm with convulsive energy, and gazed upon my face with a searching glance, as if she would read the inmost secrets of my breast: she passed her hand across my head and face, to assure herself my figure was not a vision; her whole arm was thus revealed, and, though attenuated, its purity was dazzling.

"Oh, signor! dear and good signor! oh, if you should deceive me!" she exclaimed, clinging to my hand and weeping bitterly. "Oh, if you should be but some emissary from the accursed bishop! At times he comes, like an evil genius, to offer me freedom. Ah! canst thou guess its price? I will not go with thee—away! leave me!"

"Can there be greater misery than that which you now endure?"

"No, no; there cannot! Who can live without hope? yet all fled from me! Oh, my Luigi! hadst thou been living, I had not been forgotten to perish thus! My sisters ——"

"Luigi!" I reiterated, while gently removing the dishevelled masses of silky hair which veiled her features—a cry burst from me! I beheld the

belle of Palermo, the nun of Crotona, the sister of Bianca, who had been so cruelly carried off by the sbirri of this infamous Petronio of Cosenza. "Francesca!" I exclaimed; "Francesca of Alfieri do you not remember *me* ?"

She regarded me fixedly, pressed her hands upon her temples, and then shook her head mournfully.

"I am Claude Dundas—the friend of Santugo, and betrothed of your sister Bianca." I threw my arm around the poor bewildered girl, whom at that moment I loved with all the tenderness of a brother.

"The friend of Luigi!—O, tell me if he yet lives? Tell me, though the answer should destroy me at the instant!"

"He lives, signora; but you alone can restore him to perfect happiness."

She raised her hands to Heaven, and an exclamation of pious and fervent thankfulness died away on her lips: a bright blush for a moment shone on her wan, but alas! no longer beautiful cheek, and had not my arm supported her she would have sunk on the pavement in a swoon. Without delaying a moment, I bore her away, and locking all the doors after me, deposited the keys in my pocket instead of in the niche. The church was empty, and the cardinal gone. Leaving my charge for a moment in the recess of an old monument, I hurried to the porch: I reeled

giddily as the full glory of noon blazed on my sight; so overpowering was the glare of light after the obscurity of the vaults. Hailing a passing calesso, I desired the driver to draw up near the door: on beholding Francesca, he scratched his unshaven chin, and appeared in an unpleasant state of doubt; but on my slipping a scudo into his hand, and desiring him to drive to the cardinal's villa, all his scruples vanished, and we drove off.

Great was the astonishment of the good cardinal, when I entered the lower saloon or drawing-room, leading the squalid apparition of poor Francesca; who was weakened by long confinement, and overcome with awe on finding herself in the presence of so high a dignitary of the church. She sank upon her knees, clasping my hand in hers, and not once daring to raise her timid eyes to the face of York; who had arisen on our entrance, and regarded us with a stare of silent wonder.

"Captain Dundas!" he exclaimed, in a tone which had something of sternness in it; "what am I to understand by this intrusion—and who is this woman?"

Francesca trembled violently; she would have spoken, but the words died away in whispers on her pallid lips.

"My lord—your eminence, pardon me! The case is urgent, and my meeting with this lady so unexpected, that with your usual goodness

you will excuse my importunity, while I relate as briefly as possible her unhappy story: it cannot fail to draw forth that gentle sympathy which no member of your illustrious house ever refused to the unfortunate."

This was graciously received: the old cardinal was as accessible to flattery as if he wore a crown; a pleasant smile spread over his features, and resuming his throne-like seat in the large gilt-chair, he said, waving his hand,—

"Proceed, sir: I trust I have fallen not away from the ancient virtues of my ancestors. You know the old homely saying,

'A king's face
Should give grace:'

And here at least we are a king, and our subjects shall not sue in vain. Catanio, hand the lady a chair, and Captain Dundas will please to proceed."

I endeavoured to raise Francesca; but altogether overcome with a sense of her imaginary unworthiness, in a presence so august, she remained kneeling in painful humility, with downcast eyes and trembling limbs. I pressed her hand to reassure her, and recalling all her story related it briefly, and in such a mode as I deemed would be most pleasing to the ear of the aged duke, and most likely to obtain his sympathy; which the unhappy never claimed in vain.

"De Bivona and my Lord Bishop did right,"

he replied, "in capturing this runaway; and the doom to which the latter consigned her, is only such as the laws of the most holy Catholic Church have from time immemorial directed for broken vows."

Francesca trembled more violently, and my heart sank: all hope seemed to die away when the cardinal frowned on our cause.

"O, may it please your eminence to bend a favourable eye on this unhappy girl? You will confer a boon on the descendant of a family which of old was never wanting in loyalty to your house."

He remained buried in thought for a time.

"Captain Dundas," said he, "I will think over this matter: the bishop may have stretched rather too far that high authority with which the Church invests her servants; but this unfortunate sister must return to a convent, and there remain until her case has been duly considered. My order will assure her of the kindest treatment. Catanio!" he rang his bell, and the fac-totum appeared.

Although Francesca regarded with invincible repugnance a return to a convent, where she would be subjected to the impertinent scrutiny of the sisterhood, and perhaps that of a severe superior, yet it was a joyful relief from the horrors she had endured: I led her away, in tears, and gave the cardinal those thanks which she was unable

to articulate. He wrote a brief note to the abbess, which Catanio was to deliver. The calesso was at the door, and we drove off at true Neapolitan speed to the Cistercian convent at Canne.

We resigned Francesca to the superior; whom I was glad to find was a short and stout old lady, with double chin, two merry twinkling eyes, and a visage which betokened the utmost good-nature. The poor girl wept as if her heart would burst, when we prepared to retire; but on my obtaining permission to visit her often, she became more reconciled. I left the prison-like nunnery, feeling happy that I could thus befriend Santugo by protecting his Francesca, and restoring her to light and life: the whole affair had quite the air of a romance. Dismissing Catanio, I went to the shop of a locksmith, whom I desired to make three keys like those of the vaults, which were placed in his hand.

He bestowed an inquisitive glance at my curious monastic garb; but on my displaying a few ducats, readily took an impression of the keys in wax: on receiving his promise that a new set should be in readiness next day, I hurried off and restored the originals to the niche where I had promised to deposit them.

I was overjoyed to find the venerable cardinal so much interested in Francesca's favour, that he forthwith despatched a courier to Rome, praying for her dispensation; which I then considered as

certain: his influence with Pope Pius being so great, that a boon so trifling as loosening the vows of a nun could not be refused him. I knew not how to express my thanks: he was conferring as great a gift on me as on the visconte, and I contemplated with joy the happiness our return would diffuse at the Villa D'Alfieri, when I restored a bride to the arms of Luigi; while, in return, he——but let me not anticipate that, for fear of a disappointment.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CHANCE OF ESCAPE LOST.

A WEEK slipped away: I visited Francesca every morning, and saw, with pleasure, the bloom returning to her faded cheek, and the lustre to her sunken eye: yet I spoke not of the dispensation, while there was the least chance of a miscarriage; knowing that she was too weak to stand many alternate shocks of grief and joy.

Notwithstanding the gracious manner and winning kindness and hospitality of the cardinal—who appeared to possess that charm hereditary in his family, by which he gained the hearts of all who knew him—I was impatient to deliver at Crotona the despatches with which I was entrusted; to fling aside the slovenly cassock, and don, once more, my smart uniform. I grew heartily tired of the disguise, when its novelty passed away; and bestowed many a most unpriestly malison on its ample skirt, when it impeded me in walking.

One evening Catanio came to me in a hurry, saying "*his Majesty* wished to see me without a moment's delay:" he was most scrupulously exact in styling him thus.

I found the cardinal seated on a lofty terrace, where he usually passed the evening, enjoying the beauty of the prospect and coolness of the air.

"Sir," said he, "a path is just opened for your escape, and you have an opportunity which may never occur again. The British ship I mentioned to you is again off the coast, and a boatman will take you on board after dusk. There are no French gun-boats in the gulf, therefore you can escape in perfect safety."

While he spoke, a frigate hove in sight: she was clearing a point of land, over which her top-sails were glittering in the light of the setting sun; which was then gilding the glassy waters of the gulf, and reddening, with its last rays, the surrounding shore. It was the *Amphion:* her bellying canvass shone white as snow, as she rounded the promontory, and the evening wind unrolled the bright scarlet standard at her mizzen peak: that standard which a Briton never hails with such joyous pride as when it waves in the breeze of a foreign clime. Gracefully the beautiful frigate came on, with the white foam curling under her bows

and rolling past her swelling sides, from which thirty-six pieces of cannon protruded through the port-holes; and we could discern the long flush line of her gun-deck crowded with men.

A smart American ship, which had probably been blown up the gulf by the late storm, passed at a short distance on the opposite tack, showing her stripes and stars. Scarcely had she cleared the *Amphion's* quarter, when a puff of white smoke curled from it, and a gun-shot whistled across her fore-foot, skimming the water beyond. The Americans immediately took this rough hint, and lowered their topsails to our flag—a good old custom of ocean homage, which of late years has been disused.

"For what reason has the frigate fired on the poor merchantman?" asked the cardinal.

I acquainted him with the ancient etiquette, by which Britain compelled the flags of foreign nations to do homage on her wide watery dominions; and a smile of gratified pride lighted up the glistening eyes of the listener.

The frigate would be close off Canne, when she crossed the gulf on the other tack; and the cardinal observed that Catanio would have a boat waiting on the beach after dusk. It was a tempting offer, and a most tantalizing sight to behold

within musket-shot a British ship, for whose commander I had important despatches; but to abandon poor Francesca, when I was so anxious to convey her to a place of safety, and to present her in person to Luigi, was a project I could not relinquish. The cardinal read the expression of doubt which my face betrayed.

"Do you not wish to return to your friends and your duty?" he asked.

"Anxiously," I replied; "but not without the Signora D'Alfieri, whose dispensation you so graciously requested. Permit me to reside here a few days longer—at least until it arrives—that I may convey this desolate girl to the arms of the only friends whom war and time have left her. You will thus confer another boon, which I shall long remember, though I never can repay."

"As you please, Captain Dundas. I shall be very happy if you reside with me so long as your duty and inclination will permit you. Happy indeed! Seldom it is now that an English tongue is heard among my diminished household; save when some Scottish priest from Douay, or some Highland gentleman whom English interest and the change of manners have left uncorrupted, comes here to pay homage to the last of the Stuarts. Yet their presence brings more sorrow

than pleasure: it raises up those airy visions which shipwrecked the happiness of my chivalric brother, and beseem me not to think upon now, in my helpless obscurity and very old age; creating a useless longing to behold that isle of which I have heard and thought so much, and which I fain would look upon before my eyes close in their last slumber, and I am laid in the tomb of my father at Frescati."

Thus the good cardinal continued for hours: there was a something in his tone and manner which touched me deeply. Could I listen to his words without sympathizing with fallen greatness, in the person of the last representative of our long line of kings?

The sun went down, crimsoning land and sea with a warm glow, as it sank behind the hills; the ocean changed from bright yellow to deep blue, the stars were shining in heaven, and the *Amphion* had diminished to a speck on the distant waters of Tarentum, before the cardinal ended his reminiscences and disjointed self-communings, and, leaning on my arm, retired to his apartment. The frigate appeared no more: but after that evening I became doubly anxious to be gone, and waited with intense impatience the return of the courier, bringing from Rome the decree which

would free Francesca, or seal her doom for ever.

Remembering the false keys made for me at Canne, I resolved, in my assumed character, to visit the cells of the penitents, and discover those who were worthy of liberty, and those who deserved to remain in durance vile. One dusky evening I departed on this mission, with my duplicate keys and a dark lantern, and having my shovel-hat flapped over my face to avoid observation. The night soon became dark; not a star was visible, and the wind howled through the battlements of the ancient church, and moaned in its hollow aisles. Had I been timid or superstitious, here was enough, in the horrible aspect of these vaulted chambers, to deter me from advancing: but in them day and night were almost alike.

I first opened the cell of the cavalier mentioned by the guide, and on entering awakened the occupant from a dreamy sleep—a man: although his features were hollowed by long confinement, want, and care; though his eyes were wild and his beard grizzled—the expression of whose face was as prepossessing and noble as his figure was commanding. He was tall and strong in person, but heavily fettered; and his garments

were rags, which fluttered in the breeze that swept through his prison: he trembled with cold and debility. Poor man! a captivity of three long years had not inured him to the misery of the den to which the tyranny of a powerful persecutor had consigned him: his manacles clanked as he rose from the damp pavement, and a stern and scornful frown gathered on his haughty brow when he beheld me.

"Reverend signor," said he, waving his fettered hand, "you may spare me your usual exhortations, and begone: yet think not that I am so hardened as to scorn a Christian churchman. God forbid you should suppose so! but I have nothing to confess, save my abhorrence of these bonds and the foul tyranny which immures me here, in a living grave, from light and happiness; subjecting me to misery under which, had not my own indomitable spirit supported me, reason must have given way. Leave me—begone!"

"Signor Cavalier speak less angrily: I am not what you take me for, but a friend who comes to set you free. Remember, signor, that the British are the friends of Calabria; which our victorious army has already freed from the yoke of France."

"What is this you tell me?" he exclaimed.

"British troops in Calabria! And what am I reserved to hear? Naples has again become a province of France! yet not a voice has whispered it to me in this living tomb, where I have been kept in ignorance of all those great events that have shaken my country. From France—again from the grasp of France?" said you.

"From the brother of Napoleon, whose soldiers we have driven from the rocks of Scylla to the hills of Cassano; hoisting the banner of Ferdinand on the towns and castles of the provinces, and gaining one most signal victory in a battle on the plains of Maida."

"I am thunderstruck! And all this has passed in three years?"

"In as many months."

"O joy! And you have come to set me free, most reverend father?"

"Yes,—but address me not thus: I am a British officer in disguise, and placed in a most peculiar position," I replied; quite forgetting the part I intended to act, in my sympathy for this unfortunate, whose frank and graceful bearing gained my entire good-will. "This Bishop of Cosenza," I observed, "seems a tyrant, of whose cruelty and injustice I have heard innumerable instances."

"A tyrant, said you? Call him monster, fiend, or what you will: the flaming depths of hell contain not a darker spirit, a more designing devil! You offer me life: yet what is life to me now, when every flower that adorned my path in youth has been crushed and blighted, and every beam of joy extinguished, till gloom, horror, and revenge have settled like a shadow on my soul? O, signor! words cannot depict the bodily and spiritual agony I have endured. Ere we go, hear me, but a moment! My story is short, but bitter. Hear it, and pity me!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SECOND PENITENT—THE CAVALIER.

I AM the Cavaliere Paolo, of Casteluccio, one of the fairest patrimonies in Naples. No young man entered life with brighter prospects than mine, when, at the age of twenty, I found myself master of a handsome fortune and the love of Laura Molina, my fair cousin. I had been betrothed to her in infancy by my father; who, as her guardian, wished to keep her ducats in the family. When at college, the idea of being compelled to marry my little cousin was a source of continual vexation to me; and from very obstinacy made me prone to fall in love with every other girl. My marriage seemed the commencement of something terrible, and I saw with dismay the arrival of my twentieth birthday; when throwing aside gown and tocque, and after spending a year amid the gaieties of Florence and Naples, I should have

to demand my bride at the convent where she boarded.

"Per Baccho!" thought I; "if this repugnance is mutual, what a happy couple we shall be!"

On reaching the convent of St. Sabina, I found the inmates were hearing mass performed by Father Petronio, the great ecclesiastical orator of Cosenza. I entered the chapel in no pleasant mood, conning over the compliments which courtesy required should be paid to Laura; who I had been informed was the prettiest girl in a convent which was famous for its fashionable beauties.

"Ah! if Laura is like thee, young girl, what a happy rogue wilt thou be, Signor Paolo!" thought I, as the veil of a young lady (who occupied a stool near a column against which I leaned) was blown aside, revealing to me a face of such mild and perfect beauty that I became quite bewitched, and wished my unlucky cousin in the crater of Etna. Her complexion was extremely fair; her eyes blue and tender, and a quantity of light-brown hair fell curling around a face which had all that softness and bloom of feature one might imagine in a seraph. Enough! for the time, she banished all thoughts of Laura.

At last Father Petronio made an end of his discourse, of which I had not heard a syllable.

The people dispersed, and in the crowd of nuns, novices, and boarders, I lost sight of my fair unknown. I turned away with a sigh to visit this provoking cousin, whom I was bound, by my father's will, to espouse, or my ducats would every one be forfeited to the altar of Madonna.

I sent in my card to the abbess, and presented myself at the grate. The Signora Molina was called, and imagine my joy on discovering my betrothed to be the same fair girl whose beauty had impressed me so favourably at church. I conversed with her for an hour, kissed her hand respectfully, and withdrew; thinking myself a most fortunate fellow in being compelled to espouse so handsome a girl, whose fortune was almost equal to my own.

Petronio was the confessor at the convent, and officiated in the same capacity to all the beauties of Cosenza; the ladies would confess their peccadilloes to none other than this celebrated churchman, whose learning, talent, and supposed sanctity, made him the pride of the province: but he was a subtle fiend at heart, as my story will show. He was the confessor of Laura, and to him she confided all her little secrets; until for some cause she dismissed him, and preferred an aged and decrepit Basilian. I remonstrated, but she said there were reasons: adding, with a sweet smile, that I must be

her humble servant then if I would have her obey me by-and-bye.

I allowed her to please herself, and passed the time in alternately visiting the convent and my villa, which I was fitting up suitably for the reception of such a bride. The more we saw and knew of each other, the stronger our mutual love became; and often, hand and hand, have we blessed my good and provident father who betrothed us in our childhood.

One night when returning from a café, where I had spent some hours joyously with my friend Captain Valerio and a few of his brother officers, old fellow-students, all choice spirits and roisterers, with whom I had a farewell supper, I had a singular encounter.

It was a lovely Italian night; the brilliancy of the pale moon eclipsed the light of the stars, which disappeared as she rose in her silver glory above the Apennines, and poured her lustre on Cosenza's seven hills—on its steep and lofty streets, and on the round towers of its hoary castello, where Alaric the Goth gave up his soul to God—whilst their giant shadows fell, frowning and dark, on the shining waters of the Bussiento and the Cratis. Midnight tolled from the steeple of Sabina, and the most profound repose pervaded the moonlit

city. I gazed on the towering hills, on the wild and ample forest—which in the days of the Brutti extended to the promontory of Rhegium, but is now shrunk to the wood of La Syla—where the wood-cutter and carbonari have replaced the nymphs and satyrs of the ancients; I looked towards the distant sea sparkling in the moonlight, as its waves rolled round the Campo di Mare, and everything slept in silence, beauty, and repose: I was disposed for meditation and reverie—I thought of Laura, and my heart beat happily.

"In three days," thought I, "I shall be married ——"

"To Laura Molina," said a voice near me.

I started: some one had spoken, but not to me. I was near the portal of St. Sabina, and looked inquiringly at the stone figure of Bruno of Cologne—could it have addressed me? No one appeared: I paused and listened.

"And this girl is beautiful, say you?" asked a voice.

"Lancelloti, thou canst not conceive such loveliness."

"I would compliment your taste, signor, could I but find you," I muttered, grasping my poniard.

"Again I say, Lancelloti ——"

"Sword of Omar! you forget: my name is

Osman Carora," replied the second speaker. "I am a respectable Mahometan. Corpo di Baccho! I swear by turban and beard,—yea, by Mahomet!—— "

"Silence, fool! and hear me whisper."

"Either Petronio spoke just now, or Satan himself!" thought I, looking cautiously about me; having a laudable curiosity to discover those good people who took such an interest in my affairs. I retired within the deep portal at the moment that two men stood before it in the full blaze of the moonlight, and I could distinctly hear all that passed. One was a short, squat, villainous-looking fellow, whose red vest, yellow trousers, turban, brass pistols, and sabre declared him to be an Italian renegade, acting under the Algerine flag in the double capacity of pirate and smuggler. The other was the immaculate Petronio, whose breast was the repository of half the female secrets in the city—Petronio, the paragon of Cosenza,—the man of holiness, and of God!

"I tell you, again and again, Lancelloti, Carora, or whatever you call yourself," he exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, "that I love this girl fondly: yea, madly; and shall I behold her given up to this chit-face cavalier, and without a struggle?"

"Of course not," replied the other, stroking his

beard, while his imperturbable gravity formed a strong contrast to the whirlwind of passion which racked the bosom of the monk.

"For two years I was her confessor. O, the rapture I have felt in her presence! The exceeding beauty of that young girl has cast a spell upon me: I am no longer myself, the cold-hearted and calm-visaged monk, but a jealous and amorous lover. Curse on this robe! which excites only awe and gloom in the hearts of the young and beautiful. When at confession she knelt before me, was it not rapture to obtain those glimpses of her soft and snowy bosom?"

"Ay, truly, it was," responded he of the turban and slippers impatiently.

"To look on those bright blue eyes, and the stray, golden curls that shaded the dimpled cheek, to feel those beautiful hands clasped on my knee in prayer, though I dared not touch them. Never before did such a fairy being cross the path of a priest, to wean him from his God, and destroy his peace for ever."

"No, indeed, no! Sacramento! come to anchor, will you? The moon is on the wane; La Syla is growing dark, the land-breeze is coming, and the *Crescent* lies close to under the Campo di Mare, with jib and foresail loose: I must sail by day-

break, if I would keep clear of the British fleet; which my prince of crookbacks, Gaspare Truffi, says, stood down the Straits of Messina last evening."

"Right before the wind, with studding-sails and royals," said a hideous hunchback, whom I had not before observed; "and if this breeze continues ——"

"Peace, imp of darkness! and sheer off," said the pirate, grasping a pistol.

The hunchback growled, and withdrew.

"Prythee, make an end, Petronio, and say for what purpose you have brought my handsome shipmate and me hither. A priest in love is—— bah! in time you will tire of this baby-faced girl."

"Tired!" exclaimed the priest—

"O, no!
I ne'er shall tire of the unwearying flame.
But I am weary, kind and cruel dame,
With tears that uselessly and ceaseless flow.
Scorning myself, and scorned by you, I long
For death! ——"

"Pshaw! you are mad," cried the pirate, with angry impatience; "quoting the sonnets of Petrarch like a day-dreaming student, when you should act like a man of mettle. Here I am, at

your service, mine ancient friend and gossip,—Fra Lancellotti once, now Osman Carora, of the brave xebecque *Crescent*, in the service of his sublime puissance the Bey of Tripoli. Thou seest that, while at the summit of my oriental dignity, I have not forgotten thee: but speak to the purpose. That d——d British fleet—quick—thy project ——"

"Is—but come this way!" They moved forward; I paused for a moment, rooted to the spot by astonishment; and when I darted from the shadow of the porch, lo! they were gone; nor priest nor pirate could I see, though the bright moonlight still shone in full splendour on the tall windows and marble columns of St. Sabina. The *project*—the very essence of the matter—I had not yet learned; O, diavolo! On every side I searched, but saw them no more; and, with a heart full of anger and apprehension, I returned to my temporary residence in the city.

"And this is the sainted Petronio!" I exclaimed; "in love with my Laura, and leaguing with pirates to rob me of her: curse on his presumptuous soul! The podesta shall hear of what this night has revealed, and he shall drag forth to justice this wolf in sheep's clothing." But recollecting that my single assertion could not pull

down the mighty fabric of Petronio's fame, I resolved to be calm, and watch narrowly: three days more would see Laura in my arms, when I might laugh at the friar, his passion, and his projects.

Fool that I was, to be outwitted by a villainous monk, after such a warning! Laura's dismissal of her sanctified confessor was sufficiently accounted for: a dubious glance or word had, doubtless, offended her delicate sensibility, and his visits had been dispensed with for ever.

A thousand lights burned in the villa of Castel-uccio, tinting with a ruddy glow the sea and the rocks of Campo di Mare, around which the waves rolled sparkling like diamonds. Hangings of satin fringed with gold; festoons of fragrant flowers, gilded statues, and vases of alabaster; ceilings of fresco, columns of marble, floors of mosaic, and pyramids of particoloured lamps, had turned my villa into a fairy palace. Every hall and chamber was gleaming with light, and crowded with beauty and gaiety; while the band of the Italian Guards played divinely in the saloon. The soft music floated along the echoing roofs, and all were joyous and happy. It was our marriage night. The fête was superb: six weeks before, the invitations had been issued, and all of any note in the

province were invited. The fountains flowed with wine; and the pillared hall was crowded with dancers, who whirled in the airy waltz, or threaded the graceful quadrille. Nor did less joy reign without; where, on the green lawn, lighted less by the summer moon than by the countless variegated lamps which covered the walls of the villa and the trees around it, the young paesani danced the gay tarantella to the tabor and guitar.

I was waltzing with the Duchess of Bagnara, one of the most famed of our Neapolitan beauties; but I saw only my Laura, who, attired in her white bridal robe, shone among our loveliest women like a planet amongst the stars. How shall I describe her? Oh, for the power of Petrarch, and the same glowing words with which he described *the* Laura of Avignon! Not less beautiful was mine, as she shone in all her blushing loveliness; her bright hair waving around her, and her blue eyes sparkling with happiness and love. The duchess, a stately woman, with diamonds gleaming among her raven locks, was managing her train with inimitable grace, and rallying me severely on my want of gallantry and inattention to her, when the report of a pistol was heard, and shrieks of women followed. The dance stopped, the ladies turned pale, eyes met in wonder, the music died

away, and all listened in surprise; which soon gave place to terror.

Headed by a tall and powerful ruffian, in whom, notwithstanding his Eastern garb, I recognised Father Petronio, a band of armed Algerines rushed among the dancers with pistol, pike, and scymitar. Defenceless as I was, I sprang to the side of Laura; my brave friend, the young Santugo, interposed with his drawn sword: but he was struck to the earth by Petronio's pistol, the ball of which wounded the fair duchess who stood near him.

"Miscreant monk!" I exclaimed; but was beaten down, senseless: the last I remember was beholding Laura struggling in the arms of the piratical priest.

When I returned to this world of misery, I found myself many leagues away at sea, chained to the deck of the renegade's ship, the *Crescent*; which stood towards the African coast, and, favoured by the land-breeze, was then leaving the Sicilian shores behind. Through an open port, I saw the last headland fading in the distance. The deck was strewn with the plunder of my villa: but I thanked Heaven that my friends had been left, and that I alone had been carried into slavery. Laura!—had she escaped, or was she too in the hands of barbarians—a slave, exposed to

every indignity and horror? I trembled—my heart sickened: I gnashed my teeth, and sank upon the deck in a stupor, caused by rage and disappointment, mingled with love and fear for Laura.

From this state I was roused by being dragged along the deck by the villainous Carora, who flung me, while heavily ironed and unable to resist, down the companion-ladder with such force that I lay stunned and motionless. Oh, misery of miseries! in the cabin of the pirate was Laura Molina—the girl whom but yesterday I had so joyously and solemnly espoused at the altar of St. Sabina—whom I had sworn to love for ever,—struggling in the strong grasp of Petronio.

She yet wore her bridal dress: but her bloom, her jewels, and wreath were gone. A stranger could not have recognised the blushing bride of yesterday, in the pale but beautiful phantom of to-day! I would have rushed to embrace her, but Carora held my fetters.

"Paolo!—my husband!—save me! save me!" she cried wildly, stretching her arms towards me.

"Laura, to God alone ——"

"Peace!" exclaimed Petronio, grasping a pistol. "Laura Molina, accept of my love, or I will blow the brains of your cavalier against the bulkhead!"

"Thy love!—O, horror!" she raised her eyes to Heaven.

"Woman! I am not in a humour for trifling. On the wide ocean, far from aid, you are completely in my power, and must address your supplications to me; for I tell you, not even heaven above, nor hell below the waters, can save you from me now! Decide—your Paolo, or me? A word may save him, or a word destroy!"

Levelling a pistol, he seemed more like a fiend than a human being: passion rendered his accents hoarse, and his visage black; his bulky frame seemed to dilate, and his breast to pant, while his eyes glared beneath their shaggy brows; and the knotted locks that fringed his shaven scalp twisted like the vipers of Lugano. His right hand was on the pistol-lock,—his left grasped the shrinking form of Laura.

"Signora!" he exclaimed, in a fierce, fond whisper, "think of the bright fortune I can offer thee in the sunny land of the Algerine!"

"Holy Madonna, instruct me what to do in this hour of agony!" prayed the unhappy girl, whose excessive misery would have melted any heart save that of the apostate. "O, my Paolo,—thou,—every hair of whose head is more dear to

me than my own life, what can I say to save thee?"

"Loved one! bid death welcome, and defy fear: but forget not that you are the wedded wife of a Neapolitan cavalier!"

"Farewell, dearest,—Laura will soon follow thee."

"Thou wilt have me then?" exclaimed Petronio, with fierce triumph.

"Never!" replied Laura, faintly, as she swooned and sank senseless in his arms.

"Then away to Satan, thou!" cried the priest, as he fired at my head: but at that moment the pirate Lancelloti (or Carora), renegade and ruffian as he was—touched by one of those qualms of conscience which at times trouble even the most hardened villains, or, perhaps, moved to pity by the exceeding beauty and agony of Laura—struck up the weapon, and the ball passed through the deck above. The priest turned furiously upon his partner in crime: but the distant report of a cannon, and the cry of "a sail on the weather beam," diverted their mutual anger for the time.

Confused by the explosion of the pistol, I was dragged back to the ring-bolt on deck; where I remained, helplessly, during all the horrors of the battle which ensued. Laura,—it was the last

I beheld of her—the last! O, Madonna mia and Thou whose power enabled me to survive such an accumulation of woe, teach me how, at this distance of time, to look upon the events of that day with resignation and calmness!

The corsair had fallen in with a Maltese corvette of twenty guns, bearing a knight-commander's pennon at the foremast head. She proved to be the *Gierusalemme*, commanded by the brave Calabrian, Marco of Castelermo; and an engagement being unavoidable, the corsair, which had an equal number of guns, prepared for action. Five hundred of the greatest villains under the sun stood to quarters: the ports were hauled up, the guns double-shotted, the tackles laid across the deck, while round-shot, wadding, grape, and cannister lay between them in profusion. The crimson flag of Algeria was displayed from the mizzen peak. The renegade seemed in his glory, and swaggered about with scymetar and speaking-trumpet; while the once meek and holy Petronio, with a cutlass and priming-box buckled to his waist, officiated as captain of a gun; and Truffi, the hunchback, crawled like a gigantic toad about the deck, bearing an immense basket filled with shot-plugs and oakum.

Thus prepared, the Algerines awaited the attack

of the corvette; for whose success I prayed with the holiest fervour.

On came the *Gierusalemme*, the water flashing under her bows, and her taut canvass shining like snow in the noonday sun: both vessels as they neared shortened sail. The first cannon-ball passed close to my ear, and, stupified by its wind, I grovelled on the deck in despair. The corsair, after failing to weather her adversary, steered under her lee.

"Base infidels, surrender or sink!" cried a voice from the corvette, as we crossed on opposite tacks.

"To the tyrant knights of Malta!" bellowed Lancelloti through his trumpet: "to become their slaves! Bah! Never, while the great deep can hide us, and we can throw a match in the magazine!" After a good deal of skilful manœuvring, the action commenced in stern earnest.

The pirates fought like demons: for slavery or death was their fate if vanquished; but the Christians opposed them with coolness and bravery. The heavy metal of the latter battered to wreck and ruin the bulwarks of the former,—dismantling their guns, and heaping the deck with dead; whom they were soon compelled to throw overboard to clear the way. The enormous fifty pound balls

of the corvette's forecastle piece, created a devastation, to behold which made my heart leap with joy. The corsair was evidently getting the worst of the battle: her deck was torn up and ploughed in a thousand places, and the white splinters flew around in incessant showers; her sails were blown to rags, her standing and running rigging hung all in bights and loops, useless and disordered; while the blessed banner, the taper masts, and taut cordage of the *Gierusalemme* towered above the dense smoke in as perfect order as when the engagement began.

During this yard-arm contest, my situation was horrible: I was ironed helplessly to the deck, amid all its fury, and was, consequently, unable to fight or fly, to save Laura or myself. Ah! how I trembled lest the missiles of the Maltese might penetrate the place of her confinement. Incessantly they were crashing around me, tearing up the strong planks, dashing boats and booms to fragments, and scattering brains and blood on every side. The slippery deck was flooded with the red current, which gushed from the lee scuppers. I was suffocating beneath the corpses which fell continually above me, and shrieked and struggled under the ghastly load; but the ring-bolts were immoveable, and my cries

were unheeded amid that frightful din. On all sides rang the curses, threats and cheers of the living, the groans of the dying, the clanking of blocks and handspikes, the rattle of chains, and stamping of feet, mingled with the creaking and jarring of the guns as they were worked on deck, hauled back by their tackles, loaded and urged again to port; and then burst the deafening roar, while the small arms from forecastle, poop, and tops, made up a medley of horrors! Riddled below and wrecked aloft, the corsair lay like a log on the water, and the fire of her guns died away.

La Gierusalemme forged ahead and lay across her bows, which the Maltese grappled fast; and the brave cavalier who commanded leaped upon her bowsprit at the head of his boarders. A yell burst from the pirates as the red flag of *death* floated from the *Gierusalemme;* whose guns, crammed to the muzzle with round shot and grape, were once more poured into her: the tremendous fury of the broadside, sweeping through from stem to stern, killed one-half of her fighting men, and struck consternation to the souls of the rest.

The moment of deliverance was at hand. On came the boarders like a torrent; when a cry of "fire!" arrested the faculties of all, and Petronio,

the demon-monk, leaped up the hatchway with a flaming match: he had fired the ship.

"Throw her off—cut the grapplings—man the main-deck guns—fill the fore-yard! Bravissimo, St. John for Malta!" cried Castelermo, as his boarders scrambled back to the corvette, and their foes fought like fiends at the grapnels, that all might perish together. But the Maltese passed from their reach, backed their mainyard, and once more their broadside belched forth destruction on the sinking *Crescent.* Three hours had the combat lasted: the setting sun was now gilding the Tunisian hills and the Isle of Giamour.

The corsair was soon enveloped in a cloud of murky vapour, which rolled away to leeward; and Lancelloti, after throwing all his wounded overboard, prepared to abandon the wreck. Concealed by the smoke, the crew crowded into their remaining boats and fled.

O, signor, imagine my situation then! Laura—if she yet lived—and myself, were alone in the corsair; which reeled every instant as the heavy shot of the corvette pierced her. I heard a shriek from the cabin—another: it died away—O, frightful! The corsair was now a mass of flame. I might have saved Laura had I been free, but ironed hand and foot to the accursed deck—a

victim, helpless as herself—I could only rave and pray; until exhausted by the terrible emotions which wrung my soul, and half-stifled by the heat and smoke, I lay motionless in a state of stupefaction and misery.

As from an ocean hell, the hot flames burst through every hatch and port: all became red around me—my heart panted, my eyes were bursting in their sockets. I saw the masts and yards blazing and rocking above me; I heard the "vivas" of the Maltese, and the report of the corsair's guns exploding, as they successively became heated by the roaring and scorching flame.

"Now—I am gone—I am dying—God receive me!" The deck yielded beneath, and I expected to sink to the bottom of the flaming hold: but my fate was changed. At that moment the magazine blew up—a whirlwind of sparks burst on every side, the crackling deck parted beneath me, and I found myself struggling in the ocean: the corsair sank, hissing and roaring, and nearly drawing into her vortex the planks to which I was chained. The bitter briny water rushed in at every pore, and I became insensible.

On recovering, I found myself upon the deck of the corvette; from whose commander I received every kindness and attention that the brave can

yield to the unfortunate: but I was filled with an agony of horror when I reflected on the past, and the fate of Laura Molina.

Time softened those pangs; and remembering that she was with the angels in heaven, and happier than she could ever have been on earth, I became contented: but vowed never to love another!—a solemn pledge of love and piety which I have most religiously preserved. To be brief—I served with the Cavalier di Castelermo during the remainder of his cruise, against the Algerines, with whom we had many encounters; and the desire of avenging my wrongs endued me with the valour of a lion.

After the blockade of Valetta, when all hope of restoring the order of St. John to its pristine splendour had failed, Castelermo and I set out for Italy to join the grand-master at Genoa. During the voyage the vessel anchored off the Campo di Mare, and I was seized with a longing to behold my native city, and visit once more those places which the associations of childhood and love have rendered so dear to me.

On hearing that so distinguished a cavalier, with his train, was in the vicinity, the bishop of Cosenza invited us all to his palace. It was one of our glorious Italian days: the landscape danced

joyously in the sunbeams; the green peaks of the Syla, the spires of the city, the winding river, the waving woods, and the distant sea, all shone in summer beauty beneath the bright blue sky.

The memory of Laura, her beauty, her gentle innocence, our love, and our misery, made my heart alternately a prey to the tenderest sorrow, and the fiercest longings to requite her wrongs upon the wretch Petronio.

It was the levée day of the bishop; a guard of mounted sbirri received us in the porch of his palace. A crowd of richly dressed cavaliers, officers, and knights of military orders, mingling with churchmen, thronged the ante-rooms, and were introduced, in turn, by the chamberlain. Entering the presence-chamber of the great prelate, I beheld him seated in a lofty chair, wearing his canonicals and sparkling mitre, gleaming with jewels and embroidery. On my nearer approach, judge of my sensations on recognising in his stern and sallow visage, the accursed lineaments of Father Petronio. The blood rushed tumultuously on my heart, and all the long slumbering spirit of the devil arose within me.

"Gesu Christo!" I exclaimed, raising my hands to Heaven; "is this one of Thy servants—Thy chosen servants?"

Castelermo arose from his knees in astonishment, while I unsheathed my sword and sprang upon the bishop, alike regardless of his power, his friends, and my life: I trembled, I panted, I thought only of Laura and retribution.

"Hypocritical apostate!" I exclaimed, grasping him by the throat, and dashing his mitre to the earth. "Thou pest of hell! thou murderer of my wife, and wrecker of my peace! have we met at last—ha!"

"Sacrilege!" cried the strangling bishop. "O, gentlemen and cavaliers, save me from this mad man!"

"Madman! ha—peace, thou wolf in sheep's-clothing! I am Paolo of Casteluccio, and too well thou knowest me: but die, fiend, die!" The strong hand of my friend grasped my descending sword, and the life of the dog bishop was spared; although I dashed him to the floor with such force that he lay stunned and senseless.

I laughed with fierce exultation, and strove to trample him to death, but was grasped by a hundred hands. All the smothered fury of years had broken forth; and, imagining I had the strength of a Goliah, I thought to burst, like cobwebs, the fetters which were heaped upon me. I was mad —a maniac; and, knowing that I was so, rejoiced

when men who were valiant and strong, quailed before the demon-glare of my eye. The crowded chamber, the gleaming swords, the halberts of the sbirri, the prostrate bishop, and the uproar of tongues are yet before me, like a dream of yesterday: I remember no more.

When the passion-fit passed away, and reason returned, I was here, in fetters, amid gloom and woe. Three summers have come and gone, since last I saw the sun. * * * O, signor! all hope of life and liberty had faded away, and your presence alone has revived a love of existence, and a wish to look on the beautiful world once more,—on its blue skies and green hills, ere death closes these eyes for ever."

The cavalier concluded just as my lamp was about to expire, and the grey dawn was peeping through the little iron grating which lighted his dismal vault. I gave the unfortunate man my hand, and, leading him forth, struck off his rusty fetters with a stone I found near the chapel door. No pen can describe his joy on finding himself free, and breathing the pure air of the summer morning. The sun was rising in all its beauty above the dark green ridge of the distant hills; for three years he had not beheld it: he wept with joy, and, embracing me, declared, with the

enthusiasm of his nation, that his life was at my service.

"O, signor! never since I stood by Laura's side at the altar, have I felt a happiness equal to that which animates me now!"

His eyes sparkled with joy, and his haggard cheek flushed. He appeared about thirty years of age; and, but for his tattered garments and matted hair and beard, his features and figure would have been eminently striking and noble. Reminding him that instant flight was necessary, I advised him to join the chivalric Francatripa, with whom he would be safer than in any Italian city. He relished the proposal; as many men of birth and education did not disdain to serve against France under such a leader.

We parted. Catanio was tolling the bell for matins, at the villa, when I returned; and, gaining my room unobserved, threw myself on a couch, and slept till noon: I then joined the old cardinal in his daily promenade, under the cool arcades, on the seaward side of his residence.

END OF VOL. II.



